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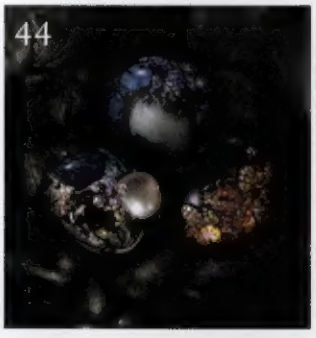

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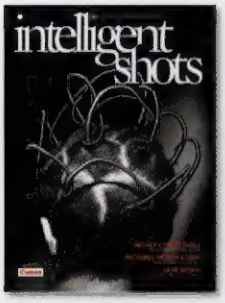

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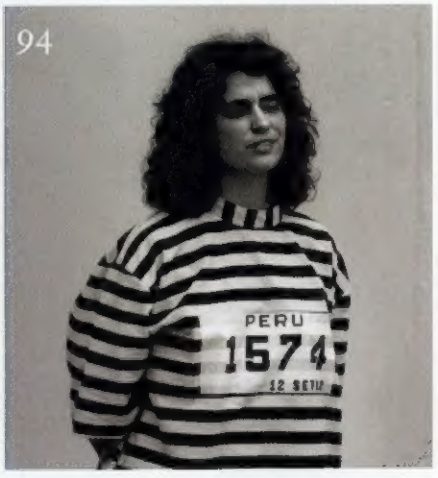

94 THE DANCER INSIDE
When Peru's terror chief was captured, so was a ballerina. Nicholas Shakespeare, who put her in a novel, meets her in jail

COVER PHOTOGRAPH ***JILLIAN EDELSTEIN***

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An icy morning in January, canton de Vaud, switzerland. From its tour ronde, the town of Orbe overlooks a plain that stretches as far as the eye can see. At the heart of this no man's land, a modern anthill is at work, 24 hours a day - the international headquarters of Nestlé Nespresso. Its smooth-walled architecture, set off with a pattern of overlapping rectangles, is reminiscent of the elegant casing of its capsules. The aroma of coffee filtering from deep within starts stirring my still half-asleep sense of smell.

It's 8:30am. Time for a little coffee. At the entrance to the factory, like in an haute couture workshop, collections of capsules create a large and colourful wall fresco. The voyage to the world of coffee has begun. I spot a coffee plant with green leaves and red berries. Where am I? In Nicaragua, India, Kenya or Switzerland? A lover of horticulture is tending to it, delicately wiping its leaves. The jewel in the crown of the Nespresso Grands Crus. The first coffee makes me feel tipsy. Delicately tasting a Ristretto I am now at the bar of an Italian trattoria... A warm accent from South America brings me back to reality. Draped in a researcher's coat, Alexis Rodriguez, surrounded by five other tasters, invites me to "la degustacion". A rare privilege, the importance of which I realise when I have to take off my jewellery and put on the regulation white smock and rubber soled safety shoes. Let's not joke about science. With his diplomas in microbiology and biostatistics and his many travels to wherever the magic beangrows, the green coffee manager, born in Bogotá in Columbia, starts the ceremony. In a gathering that borders on the religious, a man who has been a Nespresso taster since 1999 carefully lifts the lid and breathes in. He then plunges his silver spoon into the container, which is always the same so that the taste does not change. He brings the spoon to his lips, eyes closed, and forcefully slurps very noisily, sucking the hot beverage to [illegible] on its deepest flavours. With the precision of an [illegible] and calm, it's in perfect [illegible] a couple of [illegible] with [illegible] of [illegible] with the [illegible]

standardised process with very strict rules: tasting happens before midday, when the taste buds have not yet been bombarded by too many spices and tastes. Wearing perfume or scented creams is also not allowed. Unused to this score where the notes become tastes in a clever alchemy, I silently witness the concert. Sitting at a round table with mini stainless steel basins and minute personal computers, the tasters solemnly participate in the ceremony. In front of each of them is a parade of six cups, grouped in a perfect line under a small card displaying the name and the map of the country that the coffee comes from (Columbia, Brazil, Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Kenya, Ethiopia, India). The green coffee is placed dry in the white porcelain coffee pots. The coffee pots are then filled with fresh water heated to between 90 and 92°C (194 and 197.6°F), always 5g of coffee to 100ml of water. From the first tasting, the 3D trip is instantaneous. "The beans from India remind me of the mysterious landscapes that I've crossed. Those from Columbia conjure up images of high mountains hollowed by waterfalls. Those from Brazil bring to mind its plateaus. Recognising basic tastes such as acidity, bitterness, sweetness, saltiness, fragrances or other typical notes requires hard work. But sensitivity is physiological and that's what is expressed first of all".

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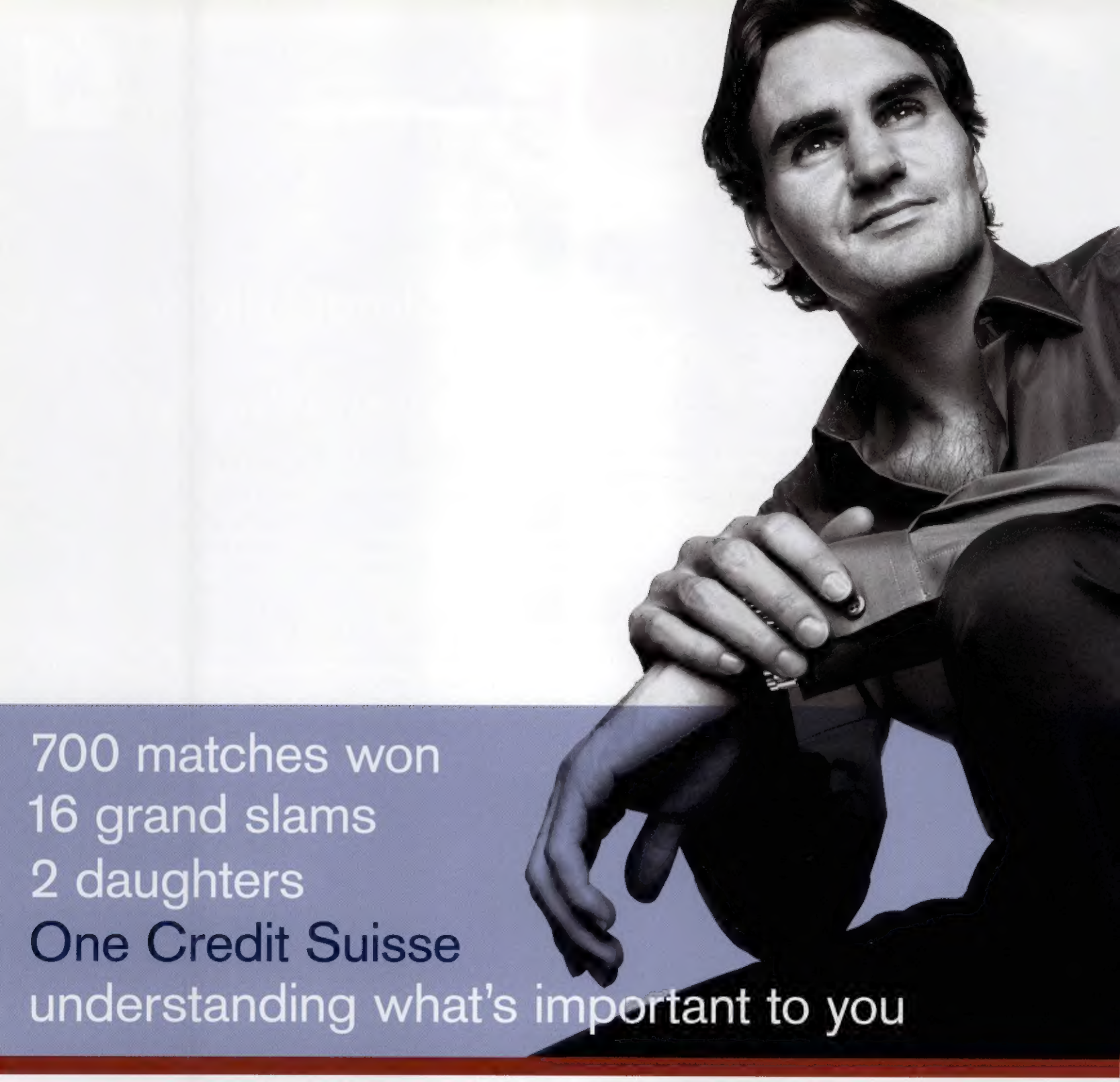

Roger Federer attributes his many successes to an enduring love of tennis, to hard work and focus in the heat of competition. Through experience, Credit Suisse understands the many facets of success and the nature of successful people. The one thing common to them all is the motivation they derive from others. Credit Suisse, the bank behind Roger Federer.

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CREDIT SUISSE

IN THE JUNGLE of 21st-century journalism, there are a few endangered species. One of them is the profile: a painstaking portrait of an individual. It is partly a casualty of the celebrity industry. If public figures are only prepared to give an interview for half an hour in a hotel room, they can hardly complain if the resulting piece is thin. The great profiles written in English down the decades – mostly by American writers – involved far more access than that. The authors took their time, and the subjects gave it. Our cover story in this issue, a profile of the actor-turning-director **Ralph Fiennes** *(page 70)*, has taken two years.

The writer is Julie Kavanagh, our contributing editor. A biographer (of Frederick Ashton and Rudolf Nureyev), Julie approaches a profile as a mini-biography, trying to get to the core of her subject. Fiennes himself played his part, giving her several interviews, encouraging his family and friends to talk to her, and agreeing to be observed at work. Through Julie's eyes, we see him rehearsing "Oedipus" and directing "Coriolanus". The good profile-writer is an archaeologist, digging away till something glints in the dirt. We hear about Fiennes's childhood, his mother, and even his mother's mentor. We see him having lunch with John Gielgud 11 years ago, a charming scene captured in a flurry of vivid jottings from Julie's notebook.

On stage and screen, Fiennes knows no fear: he doesn't mind if the audience dislikes him, whether he is being a duke, a gangster or a wizard's nemesis. He brings that spirit with him here. In Jillian Edelstein's pictures, you can see how he deals with the camera – not flirting but fully engaging with it, eyes alight. And he is willing to be written about in a grown-up way, warts and all. The result is the longest piece we have published, and one of the most penetrating.

We have three more treats among the main features. In **Appleism v Googleism** *(page 62)* Robert Lane Greene looks at the clash between two companies that are now much more than that. His piece is a look at the way we live, and think. As we watch television, we barely notice if the set is a Samsung, but as we use a Mac, we are keenly aware of it. In **The dancer and the terrorist** *(page 94)* Nicholas Shakespeare, whose novel "The Dancer Upstairs" was based on actual events in Peru, finally meets the imprisoned ballerina who was one of his central characters. He tells a true story that reads like pure fiction. Our **photo essay** *(page 84)* captures the crazy world of Scandinavian surfing. The pictures are so beautiful, it's as if Turner has caught a wave. Photography is a vital dimension of the magazine and in this issue we have devoted a special supplement to it, Intelligent Shots *(after page 102)*. It is kindly supported by Canon and is editorially independent, as ever.

In October *Intelligent Life* became an app, in America. We published the full autumn edition, with every page subtly redesigned to work on the iPad in both formats. It was named as one of the ten best publishers' apps in America, along with the *New Yorker, Time* and *Sports Illustrated*, on a list drawn from 250 contenders by a firm of consultants. From this issue, all being well, the app will go global. It is free for the moment, thanks to support from Credit Suisse.

In November, at the British Society of Magazine Editors' Awards, I had the good fortune to be named Editor of the Year (Lifestyle magazines). *Intelligent Life*, the judges said, was "a new kind of lifestyle magazine that lived up to its billing". An editor is only as good as his staff and contributors, so this is a round of applause for them. My colleague Graham Black was shortlisted for Art Director of the Year, and would have been a deserving winner. Our editor-in-chief, John Micklethwait, won the big prize, Editors' Editor of the Year, possibly for his work on *The Economist*. ~ TIM DE LISLE

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TIM ATKIN (The Wine-List Inspector, page 34) is a Master of Wine and a columnist for the *Times*. He was named Louis Roederer International Wine Columnist of the Year 2009.

NICHOLAS BARBER (films, page 24) is a film critic for the *Independent on Sunday*.

SIMON BRIGGS (sport, page 38) is a sports feature writer for the *Daily Telegraph*.

ROBERT BUTLER (Going Green, page 39) is a former theatre critic. He blogs on the arts and the environment at the Ashden Directory, which he edits (ashdenizen.blogspot.com).

MICHAEL CHURCH (opera, page 30) is the classical music critic of the *Independent*.

ED CUMMING (film, page 114) is a former *IL* intern who now reviews films on television for the *Daily Telegraph* and books for the *TLS*.

JOSIE DELAP (catering, page 36) is the Middle East and Africa editor of *The Economist* online.

MARIA DOULTON (jewellery, page 44) writes about jewellery and watches for the *Financial Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. Her latest project is thejewelleryeditor.com.

MAGGIE FERGUSSON (Winter Reading, page 113) is literary editor of *Intelligent Life*, secretary of the Royal Society of Literature in London and the award-winning author of "George Mackay Brown: the Life" (John Murray).

WILLIAM FIENNES (museums, page 104) is the author of "The Music Room" and "The Snow Geese" (both Picador), and writer-in-residence at the American School in London.

ANTHONY GARDNER (talks, page 26) edits the Royal Society of Literature's magazine, *RSL*. His first novel is "The Rivers of Heaven" (Starhaven).

HELEN GORDON (The Line of Beauty, page 54) is a freelance writer and former associate editor of *Granta*. Her first novel, "Landfall", is forthcoming from Figtree.

ROBERT LANE GREENE (Appleism, page 62) is an international correspondent for *The Economist*, based in New York. His new book is "You Are What You Speak" (Delacorte Press, March).

SIMON HOPKINSON (food, page 35) is a chef and author of "The Vegetarian Option" (Quadrille).

LIZ JOBEY (Walther collection, Intelligent Shots page VI) is associate editor of the *FT Weekend Magazine* and the author of "A Photographic History of the 20th Century" (Picador).

JULIE KAVANAGH (Ralph Fiennes, page 70) is contributing editor of *IL* and a former London editor of *Vanity Fair* and the *New Yorker*.

J.M. LEDGARD (The Playlist, page 109) is east Africa correspondent of *The Economist* and author of "Giraffe" (Cape). His next novel will be about love, the deep and holy war.

ISABEL LLOYD (theatre, page 22; surfing, page 84) is assistant editor of *Intelligent Life*, a former actress and an occasional surfer.

DANIEL MANSSON (photo essay, page 84) is a freelance photographer based in Stockholm. His third book, "Cold Water Surfing", was published earlier this year (DDMN Publishing).

PAUL MARKILLIE (cars, page 42) is innovation editor of *The Economist*.

JOE PARHAM (documentaries, page 26; Chaucer, page 112) is an intern at *IL* and a comic actor and writer with Kieran & the Joes.

KATHRYN RATHKE (Chaucer, page 112) is a Seattle-based illustrator. She won a *Journal of Creative Excellence* award for her work here in 2009.

JASPER REES (buying photography, Intelligent Shots page XVIII) is an arts feature writer for the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Sunday Times* and theartsdesk.com. His next book, "Bred of Heaven", is about Wales and Welshness.

STEFFEN SCHRAGLE (Walther collection, Intelligent Shots page VI) won two International Photography Awards this year for his pictures of bridges in Singapore and buildings in Cape Town.

NICHOLAS SHAKESPEARE (The dancer inside, page 94) is a novelist and critic. His latest novel is "Inheritance" (Harvill Secker). A shorter version of "The dancer inside" was published in German in the October edition of *Geo* magazine.

TOM SHONE (New York, page 124) is a former film critic of the *Sunday Times*. His first novel, "In the Rooms", is now in paperback (Windmill).

ROBERT ROWLAND SMITH (psychoanalysis, page 40) is the author of "Breakfast with Socrates" and the forthcoming "Driving with Plato" (Profile).

WILL SMITH (zookeeper, page 130) is an actor and author of "How to Be Cool" (John Murray).

TOM STANDAGE (gaming, page 43; Apple and Google sidebars, page 68) is digital editor of *The Economist* and author of "An Edible History of Humanity" (Atlantic).

MATTHEW SWEET (Visual CV, page 110) presents "Night Waves" on BBC Radio 3. The author of "Shepperton Babylon" (Faber), he has just finished a book about London's grand hotels in the second world war.

HENRY TRICKS (Japan, page 116) is *The Economist*'s Tokyo bureau chief.

OLIVIA WEINBERG (exhibitions, page 21) is a former editorial assistant at *Intelligent Life* and a master's graduate of King's College, London.

REBECCA WILLIS (Applied Fashion, page 52) is associate editor of *Intelligent Life* and a former travel editor of *Vogue*.

CLAIRE WRATHALL (This Quarter's Quarters, page 127) writes about travel for the *Financial Times* and the *Guardian*.

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LETTERS

The age of the acronym

Re: OMG, etc (Features, autumn)

I encountered what I consider to be the pinnacle of acronyms during my service in the Norwegian army. On my first day, while we were struggling to decipher an acronym-infested inventory of our equipment, our sergeant entered the room. "You'd better just get used to the TLAs right away," he said before leaving again, giving us no clue as to what this might stand for. We later learned that a TLA is just that – a three-letter acronym.
DAVID MAGNUS MYR, STRASBOURG

Robert Lane Greene's article about three-letter acronyms jogged my memory. About 20 years ago I worked at an insurance company, in a team crawling with Arthur's Androids (we called them worse names) who all used TLAs liberally. One callow youth in particular could barely complete a sentence without them. In one meeting, discussing an issue of risk, he said, "We are going to have to keep a BDI on this." The rest of us looked at each other in puzzlement. Eventually I cracked. "What on earth does B-D-I stand for?" I cried. "No," said the youth, "a B-D-I... beady eye."
NEIL RODGERS, BEACONSFIELD, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

You published an entire article on the rise and rise of the acronym and you did not mention the ubiquitous "OK". My understanding is that it stands for "all correct" which spelt phonetically is "orl korrekt".
SAM BAYNE, PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD

Doubt and dogma

Re: The limits of science (Intelligence, autumn)

Anthony Gottlieb writes that "It is perhaps the biases of science reporting in the popular press that produce the most misinformation". As a science teacher, I believe he is right. Many journalists do not understand basic scientific distinctions – those between correlation and causation, or inference and observation, for example. Fundamental concepts such as "model", "theory", "law" and "hypothesis" are weakly understood by most students and therefore, in all probability, by a majority of the population – including those making decisions which influence the progress of science. In these circumstances, developing the concept of science as a complex human activity whose highest value is truth is difficult. Part of the solution is better science education for all.
LAURIE MCGINNESS, SYDNEY

Gottlieb's dismissal of Pyrrho of Elis's scepticism is a fallacy. Pyrrho's suspension of judgment does not make taking decisions impossible. It merely means that one is alert to the possibility of error. The advantage of this is that one is more careful when making a decision and less likely to get an unpleasant surprise. A sceptic may venture an opinion, but he will always remember that that is all it is: an opinion.
STEFAN VAN DEN BROECK, GHENT

Science isn't so much believed as trusted. It is understood that results generated by scientific inquiry may be replaced by other, better results. An error has no claim on future reasoning. Trust will be increasingly important as science and technology become more specialised. If people aren't taught what to expect from science, it is no surprise that there is a healthy market for nonsense.
JON MONROE

Science is a set of tools for determining consensual truths. Its theoretical assumptions are limited to rigorous observation and precise accounting of aspects of the problem to be examined. The alternative is simply the imposition of beliefs by dogmatic authoritarianism. The elevation of personal experience and emotions over reason and science results in a tyranny of selective truth >

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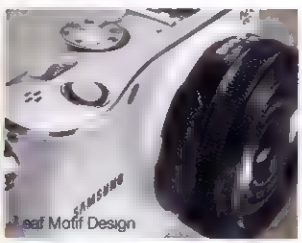

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> in the service of power. Kuhn, Popper and Polanyi do not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Science, with all its difficulties, remains the best mechanism for ensuring a democracy of mind and human progress. It allows for questioning and testing, where the alternatives appear to be intolerant even of doubt. The spiritual will forever be personal and unavailable to consensual determination, but once a claim is made about a reality we share, it is there for us all to challenge.
STEPHEN PIKE, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND

Science has become the higher authority to which people appeal to support their own agenda. When science is allowed to become holy writ, it not only makes it harder to come to a good decision when experts disagree; it makes it harder to do good science because there is so much riding on the outcome of research.
NMCDNYC, NEW YORK CITY

Variations on a theme

Re: Shepherd's delight (Intelligence, autumn)
In Brazil, we have a delicious dish similar to the British shepherd's pie – *escondidinho* ("hidden one"). The meat base is shredded salted beef, the topping a *mandioquinha* (little manioc, similar to baby parsnips) mash with cheese. As with many Brazilian dishes, you find variations of the recipe in bars and restaurants, and people tend to eat it as tapas.
DANIELA PIRES, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Foul behaviour

Re: Penalties on the spot (Intelligence, summer)
Settling a game of football by counting the fouls is akin to settling a debate by totalling grammatical errors. I surely need embellish no further. For the record, I am of the belief that progressively reducing team sizes during extra time is the solution. It maintains the notion of a "team", tests the tactical acumen of the coach in new ways, and would deliver a result: as anyone who has ever played a game of football knows, increased space on the pitch weighs greatly in favour of the attacking force.
DAVID BLACKWELL, MANORBIER, PEMBROKESHIRE

Simple is as simple does

Re: Does minimalism matter? (Style, autumn)
More than a style, minimalism is a way of life. As most people cannot afford immaculate white walls and laser-aligned floors, the true minimalists are those who choose to surround themselves with fewer, but more beautiful and useful, objects. Even if the trend wanes, people can still live this way. Much like the Japanese did and still do.
KHIWI LIM

I love minimalism. It gives hope to people who can't afford furniture.
TYLER MONZEL

The bald truth

Re: Ducking and weaving (Intelligence, autumn)
This piece was hilarious. Politics these days really is more about packaging than performance. Winston Churchill's bald head was an asset back in the 1940s. Today he wouldn't get a look-in.
AISHA YOLAH

When it starts to get thin,
Give it the trim,
Nothing looks so grim,
As a few strands over skin.
Bald is best.
VICTOR ABERDEEN, LONDON

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THE SPRING ISSUE OF **INTELLIGENT LIFE** GOES ON SALE **MARCH 7th**

THIS SEASON

ROYAL ACADEMY/TATE/HEPWORTH ESTATE

EXHIBITIONS

Riddled with opposites

In a world full of questions, the Royal Academy is about to pose three more. What is modern? What is British? And what is sculpture? The answer is a blockbuster exhibition – the first in 30 years to examine the peaks (and troughs) of 20th-century British sculpture, with a distinguished line-up including Damien Hirst, Richard Long, Anthony Caro and Jacob Epstein.

The exhibition will be urging us to compare and contrast with some strongly themed galleries. The pairing of Henry Moore's "Festival Figure" with Barbara Hepworth's "Single Form" *(pictured)* is a case in point. Moore's work is figurative while Hepworth's is abstract; Moore's was commissioned for the 1951 Festival of Britain, Hepworth's for the United Nations Plaza in New York ten years later.

Sculpture is a language riddled with opposites. Its most successful practitioners create forms that are both solid and fluid, manifesting boldness and fragility at the same time. In response, the curators have produced a show which encourages us to uncover new connections through innovative comparisons. Phillip King's "Genghis Khan" is simple and stylised; Alfred Gilbert's "Queen Victoria" is highly decorative. Yet here they are together, exchanging regal glances.

The work on show is not all British. The classical Annenberg Courtyard will be filled with a barn originally created by the German artist Kurt Schwitters and reconstructed here by Cumbrian dry-stone-wall builders. The underlying influence of Native American, Indian and African art will be shown in a series of loans from the British Museum and the V&A. "Modern British Sculpture" looks like being a lively exhibition which raises more questions than it answers. For instance: why is Antony Gormley missing? – OLIVIA WEINBERG

Modern British Sculpture *Royal Academy, London, January 22nd to April 7th*

EXHIBITIONS AT A GLANCE

Imperial Chinese Robes from the Forbidden City (V&A, London, December 7th to February 27th). Opulent robes and accessories worn by rulers from the Qing Dynasty are shown in Europe for the first time. Intricately patterned fabrics will tell stories revealing the secrets of the Forbidden City. Dragons, decadence and dowagers create an enigmatic and culturally rich fashion show.

Gabriel Metsu: A Master Rediscovered (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, December 16th to March 20th). Gabriel who? Famous for his depictions of everyday life, Metsu was one of the most important Dutch genre painters of the 17th century. This show brings together 35 of his best paintings. Atmospheric, enticing and Vermeer-esque, Metsu is well worth (re) discovering. *Authors on Museums, page 104.*

The Vorticists: Rebel Artists in London and New York, 1914-18 (Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, January 29th to May 15th). Vorticism is full of energy and movement, and this selection is diverse with 100 modernist works on display. Highlights include "The Mud Bath" by David Bomberg >

> and Epstein's "The Rock Drill". This group of artists was based in London and this is the first exhibition of their work to reach Italy. By no coincidence, it goes to Tate Britain in the summer.

Susan Hiller (Tate Britain, London, February 1st to May 15th). Thorough survey of an American-born, British-based artist who makes powerful works out of transient objects. Mixed-media installations, video projections and mesmerising soundtracks uncover the vulnerability of our imagination Expect a challenging mix and a dreamy feel.

Picasso: Guitars 1912-1914 (MoMa, New York, February 13th to June 6th). Picasso loved guitars. They represent two of his many facets, combining the traditional with the radical. This show strings together 70 pieces from 30 collections and aims to cast new light on Picasso.

Andy Warhol: Motion Pictures (MoMa, New York, December 19th to March 21st). Warhol's black-and-white films are beautiful and harmonious; "Kiss" (*below*) is silent too. MoMa has assembled a selection dating from 1963 to 1966, and has transferred the original 16mm film to DVD – at the designated speed of 16 frames per second Warhol would approve. ~ OW

THE ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM

THEATRE

The simmering broth from "Mad Men"

It's hard to remember now, but before 1998 the starrier kind of Hollywood actor was a rarity on the British stage. Then Nicole Kidman got semi-naked in "The Blue Room", to the sweaty-palmed delight of the papers. Now it's almost a commonplace: when Jeff Goldblum returned recently for a second stint in the West End, he was only the third interview on BBC Radio 4's "Midweek" after a female adventurer from Norway and a newspaper cartoonist. Some, though, still whet the appetite. Elisabeth Moss, for example (*above*), who will be leading "The Children's Hour", Lillian Hellman's cracking schoolma'am melodrama from 1934, this spring. Some remember Moss as the president's daughter in the "West Wing", but it is Peggy in "Mad Men" that made her. Her performance – a simmering broth of dowdiness, naivety and slow-burn ambition – has earned her two Emmy nominations, for best supporting actress and best leading actress, a measure of the vivid life she has brought to the role. She has earned her laurels on stage, too. In a Broadway revival of Mamet's "Speed-the-Plow" a couple of years ago she was Karen, the dogged but driven secretary. The casting director may not have won awards for originality, but critics were thrilled by the way Moss's crisp wit clarified a character famously muddied by Madonna. So ignore the other big name in "The Children's Hour" (Keira Knightley, often pancake-flat) and go to see Moss play a closeted lesbian tormented by a lying pupil: it could be just the right canvas for her quiet artfulness. ~ ISABEL LLOYD

The Children's Hour Comedy Theatre, London, January 22nd to April 2nd, possible Broadway transfer in the autumn

THEATRE AT A GLANCE

A Flea in Her Ear (Old Vic, London, December 4th to March 5th). Georges Feydeau's masterly Belle Epoque farce, as light as a soufflé and twice as funny, gets a new outing, with Tom Hollander and Lisa Dillon slamming the bedroom doors.

Twelfth Night (Cottesloe, London, January 11th to March 2nd). Tall, dark and always interesting, Rebecca Hall makes her National debut as Viola, under the direction of her father, Peter. Odds are that Simon Callow will coast as Sir Toby Belch in a too-easy bit of casting – Malvolio would have been a more provocative choice.

King Lear (Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford, February 23rd to April 2nd). For once the play's not so much the thing, as the space it's played in: the RSC uses its latest "Lear" (with Greg Hicks) as the curtain-raiser in the main house, revamped at a cost of £113m. Blow, winds, and crack those stall seats.

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying (Al Hirschfeld, New York, from February 26th). Singalong-a-Wall Street: Frank Loesser's 1960s musical satire of corporate ambition is revived, with Daniel Radcliffe swapping his wand for a Dictaphone. ~ IL

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FILM

God save the Firth

Any actor who fancies an Oscar for his mantelpiece should aim to play either a monarch or someone with a disability, so Colin Firth – a near-miss last year for "A Single Man" – has doubled his chances this time around. In "The King's Speech", he stars as Elizabeth II's father George VI, back when he was still the Duke of York, and his stammer turned public speaking into a humiliating ordeal. As his sneering older brother Edward VIII (Guy Pearce, on top form) sidles away from the responsibilities of kingship, the duke's last resort is Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush), an Australian speech therapist who insists on first-name terms and intimate fireside chats. Chock-full as it is with stately homes and equally stately actors – Michael Gambon, Derek Jacobi, Helena Bonham Carter as the Queen Mum – "The King's Speech" could easily be dismissed as another plush piece of English-heritage cinema, but the badinage in David Seidler's screenplay is faster and fizzier than you'd expect from any film in which the hero has trouble talking. Firth, gulping for air like a fish on a riverbank, imbues the duke with a vulnerability that's bordering on tragic. Most dynastic dramas are about somebody who desperately wants to rule; this one is about somebody who desperately doesn't. If it wins any Oscars, they'll be royally justified. ~ NICHOLAS BARBER

The King's Speech British opening January 7th

FILM AT A GLANCE

127 Hours (British release January 7th). Only Danny Boyle could take the story of a climber trapped in a crevasse for five days and give it the kinetic energy of an action movie.

True Grit (January 14th). The Coen Bros remake John Wayne? It may sound like a joke, but "No Country for Old Men" proved that they could make a western as true and gritty as anyone's.

The Green Hornet (January 14th). A slobbish comic (Seth Rogen) and a whimsical director (Michel Gondry) team up for the adventures of a superhero. It worked for Michael Keaton and Tim Burton with "Batman"...

Never Let Me Go (January 21st). Carey Mulligan, Keira Knightley and Andrew Garfield (the least annoying one from "The Social Network") play three alumni of an unusual boarding school. Mark Romanek's melancholic drama is warmer, and more haunting, than Ishiguro's novel.

Black Swan (January 21st, tbc). The physicality of "The Wrestler", the dottiness of "The Fountain": Darren Aronofsky directs Natalie Portman as a ballerina suffering for her art. Like Scorsese's "Shutter Island", it's melodrama deluxe.

Brighton Rock (February 4th). Another inspired remake: Rowan Joffe turns Greene's 1930s tale of gangsters, candyfloss and guilt into a film noir set in the mods-and-rockers 1960s. Sam Riley (*below*), uncanny in "Control", is Pinkie; Andrea Riseborough is heart-rending as Rose. ~ NB

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SWAROVSKI

DOCUMENTARIES

A gem in a load of rubbish

Lucy Walker is a film-maker on a mission: to tell stories that "resonate beyond" their subject and "reveal larger forces, and larger truths" at work. She wants "to have a good effect in the world with my short time in it". She has two new films – "Countdown to Zero", a chilling look at nuclear proliferation, and "Waste Land", a powerful study of a Brazilian artist, Vik Muniz, as he returns home after years in New York to make giant portraits of rubbish pickers in Rio, using their materials.

Walker was born in London, educated at Oxford and trained at film school in New York. She made her name with "Devil's Playground" (2002) and "Blindsight" (2006), both documentaries about people striving to transcend their circumstances. That theme continues in "Waste Land", which has already won 18 awards. It gets under two very different skins: Muniz, with his artistic vision, and the rubbish pickers, with their gritty subculture. Walker feels that the camaraderie between the two – "the human factor" – is the key element, though the gulf between them seems to widen rather than narrow when Muniz gives the proceeds from his portraits to the pickers (Walker is following suit with the prize-money). Isn't there a danger of being patronising? "There's always a danger of being patronising," Walker says. So she tries to "meet people as people and listen to them. When you meet people and walk a mile in their shoes, how could you not be seeing their point of view?"

With one new film tackling the "nice illusion" that rubbish just vanishes, and the other urging the destruction of all nuclear weapons, what impact does Walker hope for? "World peace," she answers with a wry smile. Maybe not; but she does make big issues gripping. ~ JOE PARHAM

Waste Land British release expected in March *Countdown to Zero* February or March

TALKS

A very festive festival

Held at the Diggi Palace in India's Pink City, the Jaipur Literature Festival is hugely popular, not least because it's free: in 2010 it drew an estimated 30,000 people, a third of them from overseas. Led by the travel writer William Dalrymple and the novelist-publisher Namita Gokhale, it lays on a spicy variety of speakers, including Richard Ford, J.M. Coetzee, Mohsin Hamid, Kiran Desai, Kamila Shamsie, Jung Chang, Martin Amis and Orhan Pamuk. Jaipur, Dalrymple says, "really is a festival. The buildings are festooned with streamers, thousands of people mill around, we let off fireworks at night, and after 6.30 the writers have to shut up and give over to music and dancing." ~ ANTHONY GARDNER

DSC Jaipur Literature Festival January 20th to 25th jaipurliteraturefestival.org

TALKS AT A GLANCE

School of Life: Sunday Sermons (Conway Hall, London WC1). Britons have rather lost their appetite for church on a Sunday morning, but they do love a literary talk. This monthly series has two authors singing from the same hymn sheet. **John Lanchester** (December 12th) has carved a fine niche as the literary figure who understands the world of money: he tackles "the pleasingly revolutionary concept of enough". And the economist **Richard Layard** (January 23rd) aims to "start a mass movement" promoting happiness over inequality. ~ TDL

RETNA

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When we think of early rock'n'roll, we think of men: Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, above all Elvis. But there were women too, and at 73 Wanda Jackson, the so-called Queen of Rockabilly, has become the latest protegée of Jack White, tireless leader of the White Stripes, the Raconteurs and The Dead Weather. Jackson's album "The Party Ain't Over", produced by White, is a lot of fun: big, brassy takes of some old chestnuts (one from 1930) plus one of Bob Dylan's better recent songs, the Berry-ish "Thunder on the Mountain", and Amy Winehouse's show-stopper "You Know I'm No Good". A blast. ~ TDL

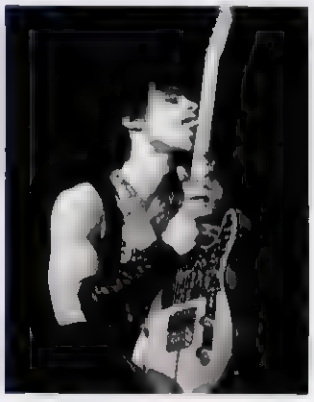
The Party Ain't Over, Released January 24th in America, January 25th

ROCK AT A GLANCE

Joan As Policewoman (album, "The Deep Field", January 24th; European tour, February 1st to March 19th). Return of a mesmeric performer. Joan Wasser used to play the cello with Antony and the Johnsons and had a romance with the late Jeff Buckley. Her own songs are stark and sometimes gorgeous.

Coldplay (shows in Liverpool and Newcastle, December 19th and 20th). Chris Martin and co are recording their fifth album, but they emerge from the studio to play two benefits for the homeless charity Crisis.

George Michael (album, January 31st). Not a new one, alas, but a reissue for "Faith", delayed by Michael's recent incarceration. It's a fizzing, eclectic pop record, but let's hope it occurred to him in jail that he could spend more time writing songs.



Prince (American tour, December 14th to 29th). Prince's albums are now almost irrelevant, except for students of marketing – the last one was given away with a handful of newspapers, and is not online, as he says the internet "is over", which sounds like a case of the pot posting a comment on thekettle.com. But Prince's concerts can still be electrifying, with an elastic voice, dazzling guitar licks and sharp moves in one ageless package. This short tour looks promising, with two shows at Madison Square Garden. ~ TDL

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CLASSICAL AT A GLANCE

La Traviata (Metropolitan Opera, New York, from December 31st). Verdi's masterpiece, directed by Willy Decker, comes garlanded with praise from Salzburg. Gianandrea Noseda adds fire from the podium, but the main draw is the young soprano Marina Poplavskaya. Her beauty matches her vocal allure, but can she find the requisite fragility?

Mahler's Sixth (Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, Auditorium Parco della Musica, Rome, January 8th, 9th, 11th). Dubbed the tragic symphony, this wildly romantic work should have unusual force under the baton of Antonio Pappano, now dividing his time between Covent Garden and Rome.

Steve Reich festival (Stockholm Konserthus, January 26th-30th). All the works which have made Reich a seminal influence over the past 40 years will be performed, from "Clapping Music" and "Drumming" to "Music for 18 Musicians" and his queasy evocation of the final solution, "Distant Trains".

Antigona (Staatsoper, Berlin, from January 30th). This forgotten opera by Tommaso Traetta should be fascinating. Composed in 1772 in St Petersburg for Catherine the Great (who liked it), it stays faithful to Sophocles save for one element: a happy ending.

Lucrezia Borgia (English National Opera, London, from January 31st). Starring the excellent Claire Rutter, this seldom-performed Donizetti opera is directed by the film director Mike Figgis. But he started as a rock and jazz musician, and his work is always musically literate.

L'enfant et les sortileges/Der Zwerg (Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, from February 27th). Bright idea to pair Zemlinsky's "The Dwarf" – a cry of pain from Freud's Vienna – with Ravel's love-letter to Colette. ~ MC

OPERA

A different kind of diva hits Covent Garden

The news that Mark-Anthony Turnage *(left)* is to unveil an opera based on the mysterious life and death of the American actress and sex-symbol Anna Nicole Smith *(above)* comes as a typical surprise. Turnage is a slow-burning composer, and never predictable. His first opera, "Greek" (1988), set the raw violence and black comedy of a Steven Berkoff play excoriating Mrs Thatcher's Britain to music which was both caustic and beguiling. His second turned Sean O'Casey's first-world-war tragedy "The Silver Tassie" into that rare thing, a contemporary opera with the durability of a classic.

Reared in Essex on a mixed diet of Bach, Mozart and black American fusion, Turnage claims that he started composing "by distorting other people's music out of boredom", and he has stayed faithful to his roots, with a love of jazz – most often Miles Davis – infusing almost everything he writes for the concert hall. The death from drugs of his younger brother inspired "Blood on the Floor", a tender elegy for guitar, strings and muted trumpets, and Francis Bacon's paintings were the explosive trigger for the densely allusive "Three Screaming Popes". Turnage's music can be relied on to be brightly coloured, intricate and contain a wealth of suggestion. With Richard Thomas – co-creator of "Jerry Springer: The Opera" – as its librettist, and the Dutch soprano Eva-Maria Westbroek in the title role, this new opera may well push out the frontiers of the art form. ~ MICHAEL CHURCH

Anna Nicole *Royal Opera House, London WC2, from February 17th www.roh.org.uk*

THE TIMES GETTY

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Tim Atkin *The Wine-List Inspector*

Dinner in Melbourne, at a television chef's restaurant: the drinking is good, but the prices are steep

NEIL PERRY IS everywhere Down Under right now. Take a Qantas flight and his name's all over the menu. Switch on the television and he's competing in the Australian version of "Iron Chefs". Enter a bookshop and his latest tome, "Balance & Harmony", is stacked on a table. Open a weekend supplement and there he is, a pony-tailed interviewee spread across two adulatory pages.

Perry is a celebrity chef all right, but he's an exceptional cook and restaurateur too. His Rockpool empire includes three establishments in Sydney, two (soon to be three) in Melbourne and another on the way in Perth. Even Perry can't be in two places at the same time, but he does his best. If he's absent, diners at the Rockpool Bar & Grill in Melbourne can watch him, via a live video link, in one of his Sydney kitchens.

High-quality, ethically sourced native ingredients are a fundamental part of Perry's philosophy – on their way to the tables, diners walk past a Baconesque meat-locker full of dry-ageing beef. He is also a great believer in Australian wine. At least two of his restaurants have won awards for their wine lists and David Lawler, the head sommelier in Melbourne, is one of the leading wine waiters in the country.

The list here is certainly extensive, with more than 1,500 bins. Rockpool Melbourne has drawn on the famous, French-focused cellar of the collector and shareholder David Doyle, just as its Sydney counterparts do, but most of it is selected by Lawler, either from a local auction house, from retailers or direct from producers. "I like to keep the whole thing dynamic," he says. Tellingly, more than half of the list is Australian.

Rockpool is essentially an upmarket Aussie steakhouse, so the majority of its customers eat meat. They often order what Lawler describes as the "biggest, oakiest wines" to go with it. "I like to fight the noble fight whenever possible," he adds, "but I have to be aware of not slowing the cogs of service down. In big dining rooms, people tend to gravitate to what they know." Only about a third of diners ask for wine advice, or choose to "enjoy the journey" as the restaurant's menu would have it, which is a shame given the quality of this 55-page list.

European-wine lovers, of whom there are many in a city as cosmopolitan as Melbourne, are well looked after at Rockpool. The list is mostly divided by grape variety or wine style, rather than country or region of origin, but Alsace, Burgundy, Bordeaux, the Loire, the Rhône, Champagne, Germany, Austria, Spain, Italy and Portugal are all well represented. The spread of producers is excellent, especially in Burgundy and Piedmont, which are clearly Lawler's twin passions.

I chose to drink Australian in honour of Perry's support for local produce. By avoiding beef and choosing grilled quail starter followed by whiting, I gave myself a greater choice of potential wine matches. I settled on a toasty, deliciously mature Hunter Valley Semillon (the 1999 Meerea Park Alexander Munro at A$65, around £40) and a youthful, ethereal, cool-climate Pinot Noir (the 2008 Gembrook Hill Pinot Noir, Yarra Valley at A$95). Both were delicious and worked well with Perry's subtler dishes.

If those prices sound high, you should see the rest of the list. The strength of the Aussie dollar makes them seem steep, but only partly. Many of the wines are just very expensive. This has a lot to do with Rockpool's location, in the rather tacky Crown Casino Complex on the south bank of the Yarra. I suspect that the kind of people who eat here, wandering in from the gaming tables and the one-armed bandits, expect to pay high prices, whether it's A$110 for a sirloin steak or A$13,500 for a 1978 DRC Romanée-Conti. Otherwise, they'd feel slightly short-changed.

The mark-ups mean that you'll struggle to find a bottle here for less than A$50. The sole alternative is to order by the glass (the 22-wine selection is eclectic and well-chosen) because there are only six half-bottles under A$50, too. Charging A$90 (£56) for 37.5cl of 2008 Alain Graillot Crozes-Hermitage, a wine that retails at £16.50 in Britain for a full bottle, is ludicrous. But maybe that's the point. If you want to eat and drink at Rockpool, you have to be prepared to pay for the experience. Or win a hand of poker before you sit down. ■

In the bin

Number of wines 1,500
By the glass 22
Under A$50 33
Over A$100 856
Best value 1999 Meerea Park, Alexander Munro Semillon, Hunter Valley (A$65)
Worst value Too many to choose from, alas
Gluggability ◆◆◆◆
Expense account adjuster* ◆◆◆◆◆
Australian Chardonnay index** 2.43

* Probability that the next-door table are paying with the company's money
** 2008 Shaw & Smith M3 Chardonnay sells at A$34.99 at Nick's Wine Merchants and A$85 at Rockpool

Rockpool Bar & Grill Crown Complex, Southbank, Victoria 3006, +61 3 8648 1900 www.rockpoolmelbourne.com

FOOD: STOVE NOTES

Under the skin

Love it or hate it, rice pudding responds to careful cooking. **Simon Hopkinson** shows how

My brother liked his deep purple, whereas I preferred mine pale pink. We stirred as mad things until exactly the correct hue was achieved, while our patient parents looked on with pity. And I suppose my mother – who had made the rice pudding to which we were so furiously adding raspberry jam – wondered why she hadn't just bought a tin of Ambrosia and served that up instead. (Cold, to boot. Ambrosia is always best cold, preferably eaten straight from the tin.)

There is a distaste for rice pudding, born, surely, of terrible school dinners. People think it's horrible. But just as chips can be exceptional when cooked with care, so can rice pudding. In terms of finesse, though not of texture and temper, a peerless rice pudding is easily the equal of a perfectly made risotto, though its preparation takes practice. Mum's pudding was usually good, sometimes OK and, occasionally, disastrous: forgotten in the bottom oven of the Aga with solid rice and burnt skin, or undercooked with pockets of milk and lumpy solids. But I always ate it anyway.

I have cooked the dish hundreds of times over the decades, and been happy with my present recipe for about the past 15 years. Although I'm unable to resist the occasional tinker – perhaps adding a tin of evaporated milk, or using unpasteurised Guernsey milk when I can find it – the basic recipe remains the same.

In essence, rice pudding is nothing more than milk, butter, sugar and rice, cooked until just set, a touch wobbly and with a gossamer-thin, pale golden tarpaulin of skin resting upon its deeply lactic surface. It must be baked slowly and quietly without being disturbed, and eaten when warm, or at room temperature. Anyway, this is how I do mine.

Over a moderate heat, melt a couple of thick slices of butter in a solid pot that will happily transfer from stove-top flame to oven – I find that decanting a simmering mass from a pan into another vessel can result in uneven cooking in the oven – then add about three tablespoons of caster sugar and the same of pudding rice (or the Spanish paella rice, Calasparra), and stir together until sticky and glistening. Pour in a litre of full-cream milk, add vanilla, a scant teacup of double cream, and a pinch of salt – my Mum always did, and it enhances flavour. The sugary rice will set into clumps once the milk is added, but soon disperses as the mixture is stirred and brought to a simmer. Once this is reached, grate at least a third of a nutmeg over the surface. Bake in a very low oven, without stirring, for about 60-90 minutes. If the surface burnishes too quickly, lay a loose sheet of foil over the top.

I love the consistency and flavour achieved by this method: its fondancy, its unmistakable milky essence, the warmth of vanilla and nutmeg, and, of course, the skin. I don't favour adding egg, nor do I like it made in the style of a risotto; to me, that is just sweet risotto, which is plain weird. These days, adding jam seems to spoil the purity of the dish, as do further embellishments. As ever, there are those who would disagree – and they have every right to do so.

The Indian rice dish known as *kheer* is a case in point. When well made, this can be delicious and is rather good cold. However, it is not rice pudding. It has nuts in it, for one thing. And sultanas. And cardamom! Saffron is occasionally used, as a sign of luxury; and if one is truly trying to impress, silver leaf can be draped across the surface. The rice employed is usually finest basmati.

On another continent, in the Little Italy district of New York City to be precise, is a store devoted to rice pudding. It's called – wait for it – Rice to Riches. Naturally, it ships overnight to anywhere in America. I am sure that the pudding is good, but it majors in a big way on "toppings". That's a step too far for me; the only topping I want would be skin, which is hardly a selling point.

In Europe, *arroz con leche* is Spanish rice pudding, with cinnamon and lemon flavours, eggs and no skin; *gâteau de riz* is the French version, using lemon again and set with eggs as a cake; *budino di riso* is Italian, also set with eggs, and using sultanas and candied orange peel for "bits". But bits, for me, will always get in the way of the most important stuff: the rice. Now that I am a big boy, I don't need jam any more. ■

SHOPPING LIST

Calasparra rice This can be found at R. Garcia and Sons (www.garciacafe.co.uk) and Brindisa (www.brindisa.com) in Britain, and in Portuguese and Latin delis worldwide.

Unpasteurised Guernsey milk In less heavily regulated countries, such as France, you can pick up raw (unpasteurised) milk in supermarkets; I buy mine from the Somerset-based Hurdlebrook dairy (www.hurdlebrook.co.uk), which sells products from its herd of Guernsey cows at selected farmers' markets in the south of England, while Beaconhill dairy (www.beaconicecream.com) sells unpasteurised Jersey milk by mail order across Britain.

Vanilla Use either a split pod, or vanilla extract – never the artificial "flavouring" – both widely available from good food stores and supermarkets. It's rarely worth buying the more expensive Madagascan-Bourbon vanilla, as opposed to Mexican – its flavour is only to nuance the rice, after all. ~ SH

ILLUSTRATION CATH RILEY

FOOD

Chicken à la rubber

Big, catered parties have got better at most things, from the flowers to the canapés. So why is the main course still dire? **Josie Delap** reports

ONE OF THE best hotels in Brussels was hosting a banquet for 200 ambassadors, diplomats and business people, and the main course was chicken in fish. Not chicken or fish: chicken in fish. As a one-time party caterer, I was shocked. Bland, dry poultry stranded in a sauce that tasted like cream boiled with haddock skin – it was a coupling more unhappy than Belgium itself.

In one way, such wretchedness was surprising – it followed a starter of salmon mousse that I ate with pleasure and a squeeze of lemon. But in another, it was all too predictable: while the standards of most aspects of mass catering have raced ahead, the main course waddles far behind.

Big events, both public and private, have improved enormously over the past decade. People choose imaginative venues: weddings in the London Eye, charity galas at the Met in New York, secret parties whose location is revealed by text on the night. The twangs of a string quartet are no longer the only entertainment; they've given way to sparky alternatives such as trapeze artists, mini-funfairs and burlesque acts. The flowers are bigger and bolder. And most party food has raised its game to match. When were you last offered cheese-and-pineapple-on-a-stick – unless it was ironic, and/or used artisan, organic, rare-breed cheddar? Plates of sushi and miniature cones of fish and chips have seen off the soggy vol-au-vents of yesteryear, and the puddings are whizzy with popping candy. And yet, and yet…when it comes to a sit-down dinner, odds are you'll still be served a hunk of chewy, tasteless meat. Who is to blame?

Partly, it's the people doing the cooking. That misguided poulet à la poisson experiment aside, most caterers play it all too safe: boeuf en croûte, chicken in Parma ham, lamb noisettes…And they do it for a good reason, at least in my experience. When I cooked for parties and weddings, my favourite dish was a Greek watermelon salad with slivers of red onion, stained magenta with lime juice, sweet mint and salty feta. It was the perfect summer salad: light, refreshing and unusual. If I was lucky, a third of it got eaten. It was delicious, but people turned the damn thing down without even a taste. Their timidity irritated me, but I could hardly shovel it on to their plates uninvited.

Catering by numbers
A dish of roast Cornish hens – aka chicken – is prepped for a White House banquet, c1967

A salad, no matter how interesting, is not what most people want to eat at a party. They expect their main course to be hot, and to include meat or fish. Achieving this for more than a handful of people all at once is a nightmare. Perfect steaks for 500 means cooking *sous-vide* – vacuum-sealed in a water bath – at 63 degrees; that in turn requires temperature-controlled, combi-therm ovens, plus battalions of staff to cook and plate the meat, dollop on the sauce, sprinkle the garnish and whisk it to the tables. None of which comes as standard in a marquee.

Jay Rayner, the food critic of the *Observer* in Britain, is clear on whom to blame: the guests. "There is a

GETTY

fundamental mismatch between diners' expectations of a meal and what a cook can actually do," he says. "Guests want fancy-pants plated food – but you can't do à la minute cooking for 500."

Rayner has one solution to suggest: "braise everything". Certainly caterers could kill two over-cooked birds with one stone if they used cheaper cuts of meat and slow-cooked them, so avoiding the chicken-posing-as-dog's-chew problem. Prue Leith, the founder of Leith's catering, is an advocate of meat cooked for hours in some kind of sauce, disconcertingly known to the trade as "wet food". These kinds of dishes can be kept hot almost indefinitely, never dry out and reheating only improves their flavour.

Other professional foodies are leaning the same way. Henry Dimbleby, one of the founders of the upmarket British fast-food chain Leon, served beef daube with celeriac mash at his own wedding (and for his birthday he had a spit-roast lamb, another option if meat is a must); Thomasina Miers, a restaurateur and the author of "Mexican Food Made Simple", had slow-cooked rabbit at hers.

What about the vegetarians? A meat-eating colleague on this magazine makes a point of ordering the veggie option at big events, as "the occupational hazard of the meat is that it's dry; the vegetarian option is usually more palatable – and it comes to the table quicker." If caterers really wanted to keep costs down and reduce the numbers of special options, they would cook vegetarian across the board. But you need balls of steel to deny diners their pound of flesh. Yotam Ottolenghi, the co-founder of the Ottolenghi delis and a cheerleader for vegetables, says that chefs are still biased against vegetarians: "They like cooking meat." The worst vegetarian meals, he says, "are the ones that try to disguise themselves as meat. You just end up with something grey and sad. The best vegetarian main celebrates the ingredients without trying to apologise for the lack of meat. It doesn't try to be what it is not."

Going ethnic works too. Thomasina Miers suggests Mexican or Indian – perhaps serving a big molé and covering the table with appealing extras like bright salsas, coriander and radishes. Leith would go for a mild curry, burnished with spices but light on chili. "If you put all the bits and pieces on the table – the chutneys, the poppadoms, coriander – it looks lovely and everyone sees it as a treat."

If all else fails, another colleague, who has reported from eastern Europe for decades and survived countless official functions, has a foolproof solution – in Russia, at least. "Head straight for the caviar, fill up on that, and then get the hell out of there." ■

HOW TO GET IT RIGHT

Journalists are obliged to go to a variety of big functions, so we asked colleagues to pick out caterers who can deliver a decent main

All in Good Taste in Pittsburgh served roast rack of Elysian Farms lamb for Barack Obama at a dinner for the G20 summit, while Michelle and the other spouses devoured their jumbo lump-crab cakes. *From $60 a head www.allingoodtasteproductions.com*

Leith's provides the food at Glyndebourne opera in Sussex, where it successfully serves all the tricky meat mains – including sirloin steak – to a house-full of non-picnickers during the interval. *From £40 a head, www.diningatglyndebourne.com*

Moving Venue, which handles events such as the Innovations awards at the Science Museum in London, has proved it can pull off roast fillet of beef with potato fondant and chargrilled wild mushrooms in less than hospitable surroundings. *From £70 a head www.movingvenue.com*

Rhubarb is a regular caterer at some of the largest venues in London, including the Albert Hall and St Paul's Cathedral. Its "bowl food" – like the dishes of sticky beef and noodle served at the 2010 Baftas party – is particularly successful, but it will happily dish up a first-class steak and duck-fat chips too. *From £46 a head www.rhubarb.net*

Villedieu-Traiteur in Marseille caters for the grandest of occasions and its clients include the Elysée Palace in Paris. But it has some affordable options for the less illustrious, including duckling with peaches and crispy quail with pine nuts. *From €22 a head, www.villedieu-traiteur.com*

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SPORT

Why sportsmen text

When they're not hitting a ball, the world's leading sports stars are stabbing at the keys on their phone. **Simon Briggs** has a message for them

IF GENTLEMEN SAY it with flowers, athletes prefer texts. This might seem surprising, given that sportsmen are hardly renowned for their literacy. But there is something about the text message – instant, easy, faceless – that suits their cloistered lives. It's not just "sexting" scandals, although the golfer Tiger Woods, the cricketer Shane Warne and the footballer Ashley Cole have all slithered down that snake. The trend runs much deeper. Banter, the sportsman's idea of communication, has gone digital.

When Andy Murray won a match at Wimbledon, David Beckham sent a text of congratulation; Murray likes texting so much, he does it during matches *(pictured)*. When Lewis Hamilton needed to make his peace with Fernando Alonso after an incident, he sent him a text. When Kevin Pietersen was barred from cricket's money-spinning Indian Premier League, he received a text from Chris Gayle of the West Indies that simply said "$$$". When Luis Suárez, the Ajax and Uruguay forward, was sent off against Ghana for preventing a goal with a handball, he got a text from Ajax's goalkeeper, Maarten Stekelenburg, telling him he was the best goalie in the World Cup.

Sportsmen's personal lives, too, are apt to be conducted by text. In September, Wayne Rooney reportedly texted the words "I'm sorry & I love you" to his wife Coleen as she was having her hair done – the closest he had apparently got to saying that he had been playing away with a prostitute. To be fair, the story may have been apocryphal, not least because it credited Rooney with mastery of the apostrophe.

We sports reporters spend hours waiting for a stray word from Rooney and his peers. So why do they prefer to talk with their thumbs? One explanation could lie in inarticulacy, or the fear of it. Surveys of teenagers show that they feel safer formulating their thoughts in text form. And many sportsmen are just teenagers with a million times the pocket money.

Then there is the lure of the technology itself. Boys love gadgets, and boys cooped up on team buses love them even more. The former footballer Mark Bright has blamed the "PSP, Xbox and Wii culture" for killing team spirit among Premier League teams. At least phones are more sociable than games consoles: according to the anthropologist Kate Fox, they help us to maintain a close-knit social network, and satisfy the rhythms of our "Pleistocene hunter-gatherer brains". Such links are vital in team sport, where players devote hours to the bonding ritual known to academics as "grooming talk". When they retire, the thing they miss most tends to be the daily joshing.

Mobiles can be used to lock people out as well as in. A group of young footballers out on the town will spend half the time fiddling with their handsets. Even more than sunglasses or headphones, the phone is part of the wall young celebrities build around themselves.

"The higher a person's status, the more layers of courtesy exist around them," says Professor Rich Ling, a social scientist who specialises in mobile telephony. "Senior executives usually have a secretary answer their office mobile and keep a second phone for family emergencies." The big football clubs run a similar system, with a press officer as the secretary. And it is not only reporters who can find their access frozen. After the Vanessa Perroncel scandal broke, John Terry reportedly sent texts of apology to Perroncel's ex, his England team-mate Wayne Bridge, but received no response.

At such times, texting is a power struggle, according to Professor Geoff Beattie, head of psychology at Manchester University. "In an exchange of messages, someone with a narcissistic streak might make you wait, just to establish their dominance. I would put many sportsmen in that category. They are looking for reassurance all the time."

Texting, of course, is private. Sporting extroverts do it on Twitter, including the England football captain Rio Ferdinand and the wisecracking England cricketer Graeme Swann. And it speaks the sportsman's language by giving him a score: in November Swann had 84,000 followers, Ferdinand twice as many. Twitter carries their words beyond the same old circle of team-mates and sycophants, and bypasses the much-despised media. But by creating another alternative to looking people in the eye, it still serves to deepen the sportsman's exile from the real world. ■

When players retire, the thing they miss most tends to be the daily joshing

THE TIMES

Robert Butler *Going Green*

Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": the most influential hundred pages of the 20th century?

It was a beautiful moment in 1887 when a veterinary surgeon in Northern Ireland invented a new kind of tyre, to smooth out the bumps when his son was on his tricycle. Within ten years John Dunlop's pneumatic tyre – inflated canvas tubes, bonded with liquid rubber – had become so successful that the American civil-rights leader Susan B. Anthony could claim, "The bicycle has done more for the emancipation of women than anything else in the world."

The invention didn't free everyone. The raw material for the pneumatic tubes came from the rubber vines of the Congo, and the demand for rubber only deepened the damage that had been inflicted in that region by the demand for ivory. A century later, the pattern hadn't entirely changed: the coltan required for mobile phones comes from the same area, where war has claimed millions of lives over the past 12 years.

Our awareness of the shadowy stories of supply and demand also goes back to one man, a contemporary of Dunlop's. Between June and December 1890, a 32-year-old unmarried Polish sailor called Konrad Korzeniowski made a 1,000-mile trip up the Congo for an ivory-trading company on a paddleboat steamer called *Roi des Belges*. It took him nine years to find a way to write about what he saw. Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" is a story within a story, which starts with five men on a boat moored in the Thames, and one of them, Marlow, a veteran seaman and wanderer, telling of a journey up a serpentine river into the centre of Africa, where he meets another ivory trader, Kurtz. Six pages in, Marlow tells the others, "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much."

Published in 1902, "Heart of Darkness" had an immediate political impact – it was widely cited by the Congo Reform Movement – but it wasn't an instant classic. Twenty years later, T.S. Eliot wanted to choose a quotation from it for "The Waste Land", but his colleague Ezra Pound dissuaded him: "I doubt if Conrad is weighty enough to stand the citation." Three years after that, Eliot chose another line from the novella as one of the epigraphs for "The Hollow Men". ("Mistah Kurtz – he dead.") "Heart of Darkness" had become part of the cultural landscape. In 1938 Orson Welles adapted it for a Mercury Theatre live radio production. He went on to write a screenplay in which he planned – with Wellesian gusto – to play both Marlow and Kurtz. He couldn't get the movie made and was forced to move on to a project about a media mogul called Charles Foster Kane.

In the late 1970s, Francis Ford Coppola took "Heart of Darkness" and transplanted it to Vietnam as "Apocalypse Now", with Martin Sheen as Captain Willard, the Marlow character, a special-operations officer, sent on a mission to "terminate...with extreme prejudice" the life of the deranged Captain Kurtz, played by Marlon Brando. In this version the Mekong River becomes the Congo. The irony was hard to miss: just as Britain, once colonised by the Romans ("1,900 years ago – the other day", writes Conrad), had become an imperial power, so had the United States, once colonised by the British, now become one too. With the success of the movie, the novella's place on the campus syllabus was assured. "Apocalypse Now" launched a thousand sophomore essays comparing and contrasting the book and the movie.

And now "Heart of Darkness" is a graphic novel by Catherine Anyango, with the ivory domino pieces – lightly touched on by Conrad in the opening pages – looming in the foreground of the opening drawings. The theme of traceability, where things come from and the journey that they take, is vividly dramatised. It's a story for today. One day in June last year, Jeff Swartz, CEO of the leisurewear company Timberland, woke up to find the first of 65,000 angry e-mails in his inbox. These were responses to a Greenpeace campaign that said Brazilian cattle farmers were clear-cutting forests for cattle and the leather from the cattle was going into Timberland shoes. Swartz has written up his experience for the *Harvard Business Review*. His first action, he says, was to admit that he didn't know where the leather came from. It wasn't a question he had asked.

As "Heart of Darkness" has moved from one medium to another, it has made a good claim to be the single most influential hundred pages of the 20th century. If you consider its central theme – how one half of the world consumes resources at the expense of the other half – it's easy to see its relevance becoming even greater. Only the resources will no longer be ivory for piano keys, or rubber for bicycle tyres.

Conrad's artistic challenge was to make the world he saw visible to others. It's a political challenge too. Sometimes writers reveal a hidden situation, sometimes campaigners do, and sometimes it's just an accident. Few of us had much idea about the conditions in which copper is mined – everyday copper for plumbing, electrics, saucepans and coins – before 33 Chilean miners found themselves trapped 2,000 feet underground. ■

REX/R. SS STREET

In defence of psychoanalysis

Freud's ideas have become part of the fabric of everyday life – yet his methods are going out of favour. **Robert Rowland Smith** argues that the professionals have got it wrong

It is just over a century since psychoanalysis was first recognised as a science. In 1909 Sigmund Freud gave five lectures at Clark University in Massachusetts that surveyed and explained the fledgling discipline's achievements to that point – the interpretation of dreams, the analysis of hysteria, the meaning behind jokes, the reasons we make stupid mistakes. Key to them all was the operation of the unconscious, the back-seat driver whispering to us to behave in ways we'd officially disown.

Later, Freud was to remark that his discovery amounted to a third and final nail in the coffin of human pride. The first was Copernicus's bubble-bursting calculation that the Earth orbits the sun, thus displacing mankind from its central position in the universe. Second came Darwin's finding that rather than being God's special creature, descended from Adam and Eve, man was a monkey. And now Freud's own postulation of an unconscious implied that we were strangers even to ourselves.

In adding to this demoralising ledger of human limits, however, Freud had unlocked a hitherto concealed dimension. Formerly obscure or ignored parts of the mental map now had a legend, and psychoanalysis established itself as the compass by which the terra incognita could be navigated. Before long the unconscious had slipped off the couch and entered the lingua franca, and today it's virtually impossible to talk about human behaviour without drawing more or less explicitly on Freud's lexicon. Not only do we speak readily about "unconscious" motivation, but we'll happily deploy fancy psychoanalytic concepts like "being in denial" in the most ordinary conversations.

Yet for all its seepage into everyday life, psychoanalysis finds itself routinely denounced, even by those in its intellectual debt. Set aside the practical objections – becoming an analysand involves five sessions a week, at perhaps £70 per session, over many years – psychoanalysis, they say, reduces everything to sex. Worse, it does so in a form that looks misogynistic. As for its being a science, that's laughable – believing that a fireside chat with a patient about their childhood can disclose the deep structure of the psyche is plain arrogant. Not to mention the potential for planting thoughts in the patient's mind which happen to prove the theory you set out with.

So it's not surprising that in the face of these perceived flaws psychoanalysis's therapeutic rival, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), has gained ground. Although both approaches pursue the same outcome – happy patients – the underlying method couldn't be more different. Where psychoanalysis sifts the inner self to shift the outer, CBT adjusts external behaviour to ameliorate the internal state. Psychoanalysis gets to the root cause, often lying in one's early years, where CBT focuses on the presenting issue. CBT is much more short-term, usually limited to about 30 sessions; doesn't talk about erotic life unless it comes up; and generally takes an empirical approach that's easily associated with the scientific. And where psychoanalysis leaves patients haplessly to work through their own psychic detritus, CBT sets homework.

The cause of CBT has also been served by the wider health system, in which all activity is now measured to within an inch of its life, targets become paramount, practitioners get held mercilessly to account, and patients transmogrify into customers demanding accessibility. In this transparent and shadowless world, CBT provides the comforting illusion that the lugubrious terrain of mental health can yield to instant illumination under a striplight. And because it positions itself among the empirical sciences, it enjoys an affinity with pharmacologically oriented psychiatry in which symptoms, should they fail to be dissolved by therapy, can be handily lined up with drugs. Needless to say, this is a system that plays well with the pharmaceutical giants.

The irony is that in becoming more "scientific", CBT becomes less therapeutic. Now, Freud himself liked to be thought of as a scientist (he began his career in neurology, working on the spinal ganglia), but it's the non-scientific features that make psychoanalysis the more, not the less, powerful. I'm referring to the therapeutic relationship itself. Although like psychoanalysis largely a talking cure, CBT prefers to set aside the emotions in play between doctor and patient. Psychoanalysis does the reverse. To the annoyance no doubt of many a psychoanalytic patient, the very interaction between the two becomes the subject-matter of the therapy.

This emotional muddling between analyst and patient is known in the trade as "transference", and it's important because it's the way most of our rela-

ILLUSTRATION BRETT RYDER

tionships play out in the real world – as ambiguously defined contracts. This isn't to say the analyst is short of techniques for managing that muddle, but it is to say that there's no naively "clinical" position to be assumed. The consulting room thus transforms itself into a laboratory in which patients can learn about their impact on someone else in real time, and thus grow in self-awareness – which is the prerequisite for self-improvement.

The respected therapist and writer Irvin Yalom, among others, argues that depression and associated forms of sadness stem from an inability to make good contact with others. Relationships are fundamental to happiness. And so a science that has the courage to include the doctor's relationship with the patient within the treatment itself, and to work with it, is a science already modelling the solution it prescribes. What psychoanalysis loses in scientific stature, it gains in humanity. ■

Freud, who liked to be thought of as a scientist, began his career in neurology

CARS

Hot wheels

Driving at 1,000mph is now in sight. **Paul Markillie** gets a taste

PUSH THE ACCELERATOR and the car starts moving – slowly, it seems, at first. But it's deceptive because the desert ahead is flat and featureless, devoid of visual clues apart from a straight line marked on the ground. I'm soon at 100mph with the jet engine just behind my head winding up to full power. Careful, because the car is drifting away from the line. At just over 200mph, I pull the left trigger on the aircraft-like steering wheel to ignite the rocket; at 350mph I use the right trigger to fire it at full blast. Concentrate, steer straight. As the speedo passes 750mph, the car goes through the sound barrier. At just over 1,000mph, the marker posts for the start of a measured mile flash past. Don't blink. In 3.6 seconds the posts at the end of the mile are in the dust behind me.

Then it's all action. Foot off the accelerator, release the rocket triggers and, as the speed falls away, deploy the airbrakes and launch the parachutes from the rear. When the car slows towards 200mph it is safe to step on the brakes. But I seem to have overdone it, and dropping to a crawl won't be able to coast up to the stopping point. Mark Chapman leans over with a word of advice: "You're still doing 150mph." I brake harder.

Setting a 1,000mph (1,609kph) land-speed record on a simplified computer simulator is difficult enough, but once Chapman and his team have finished building Bloodhound SSC (super-sonic car) it will be a thousand times more difficult. The person driving the car for real will be Andy Green. Besides the noise, vibration and stifling heat, his body will be pummelled by sickening G-forces. Driving the car will have to be done subconsciously because his brain will be too busy computing information, especially from the cockpit instruments. But Green is relaxed: "I've had the best training in the world for this." He is an RAF wing commander, used to having to stay cool and methodical while flying jet fighters fast and low. You learn how to prioritise, because there will not be time to think about everything. But one display will always get his attention, the one that shows the pressure the wheels are exerting on the ground. Green has to keep those wheels on the ground, not just to stay alive by preventing the car pitching violently upwards, but also because a land-speed record requires it.

No one really knows what a car will do at 1,000mph. But Green has some experience as the first person to drive through the sound barrier, in Thrust SSC at Black Rock Desert, Nevada, in October 1997. His record of 763mph still stands. Chapman watched him on television while working as an aerospace engineer and signed up as chief engineer after meeting Richard Noble, the Bloodhound project's irrepressible leader. Many of the 30-strong team (not to mention numerous others helping out) came together through a common passion for motorsport. Mostly they are like Noble: not content with a normal job.

Noble himself set the record at 633mph when he drove Thrust 2 in October 1983. Back then, as he stepped from the car, he was asked why he did it: "For Britain and the hell of it," was his reply. Noble went on to lead the Thrust SSC team and is now a whirlwind of energy, chivvying sponsors into providing parts and equipment, trying to raise some £3.2m to complete Bloodhound SSC for a pub-

ILLUSTRATION NICK HARDCASTLE

lic debut in 2011, arranging its tests and making sure that the desert strip chosen for the run, at Hakskeen Pan in South Africa's Northern Cape, will be ready for the big day in the summer of 2012.

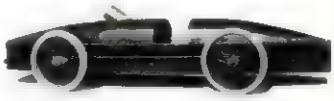
Bloodhound SSC is a breathtaking car, or at least its full-sized mock-up is; striking in blue and orange livery, it sits in a borrowed warehouse on the historic dockside in Bristol, next to Brunel's engineering masterpiece *ss Great Britain*. The symbolism is deliberate – every country needs engineers and scientists, which is why the team are involving lots of schools to give their mad idea a broader, motivating purpose and thereby increase its appeal to sponsors. And they are publishing all the techie bits online. This is bold because others are gunning for the 1,000mph title, with two possible contenders in America and another in Australia. As far as the Bristol team are concerned, that just makes things even more interesting.

The British Ministry of Defence has lent them a jet engine from a Typhoon fighter. Fitted below this is a rocket designed by Daniel Jubb, a 26-year-old rocketeer who doesn't drive but is passionate about propelling Bloodhound SSC into the record books. Jubb's rocket uses a Formula 1 engine, supplied by Cosworth, to pump hydrogen peroxide onto a solid fuel and turn it into a fiery blast. It sounds mildly alarming, but Chapman assures me it is a rather safe way of doing things because if something does go wrong the rocket can be shut down quickly.

The car will be extremely hot at the end of its first run, so the plan is for Green to drive in a big circle to cool things down before it is serviced and refuelled. The final speed is calculated as an average of two runs in opposite directions which must be made within one hour. Annie Berrisford, a 28-year-old mechanical engineer, who races vintage cars as a hobby, is choreographing the mechanics and technicians who will do this. The turnaround is one job among many hundreds that have to go right if Green is to reach 1,000mph.

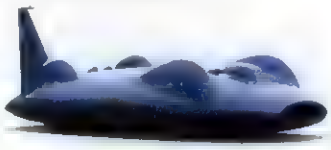
Everyone is involved in making decisions, says Green. "That means we need absolute confidence in each other." They also have to understand what they are all doing and why. To help with that, Green has been taking some of the team up in his stunt plane to experience the sort of G-forces involved. Berrisford was among them. When the blood rushes to your head "you start to feel kind of floaty," she says. Then Green flips the plane and as the blood rushes to your feet "you try to stay calm, and conscious," she adds with a grin. Green will be physically alone in the small cockpit when everything on Bloodhound SSC is firing at full power in South Africa, but a remarkable team of people will be riding with him in spirit. ■

A FEW OF THE FASTEST



1906 Fred Marriott drives the Stanley Rocket Racer to 127.66mph, which remains the record for a steam-powered car until 2009, when a team from Hampshire reach 139.84mph in a steam-car called Inspiration

1929 With a giant aero-engine cooled by ice, Henry Segrave reaches 231.36mph in Golden Arrow. Many supercars are now limited to 200mph



1964 Donald Campbell goes 403.10mph in Bluebird CN7, still the record for a wheel-driven car. Jets and rockets take over

1965 Craig Breedlove blasts to 608.21mph in Spirit of America – Sonic 1 at the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah

1983 Richard Noble reaches 633.47mph in Thrust 2

2012 Andy Green goes for 1,000mph in Bloodhound SSC

GAMING TOM STANDAGE
THE JOY OF ANGRY BIRDS

It's not a complicated game, and it doesn't embody any clever new technology. But it's great fun, has astonishingly broad appeal and manages to encapsulate the current state of gaming in a squawking, pocket-sized bundle. It is, of course, "Angry Birds".

The chances are that you have either played it, or seen someone else playing it or been invited to play it. But if not, the basic idea is that you use your mobile phone touch-screen to lob a preordained series of coloured birds, one after another, towards precarious buildings containing one or more circular green pigs. There is some kind of plot that explains all this, but nobody I know has ever bothered to pay attention to it, because that would delay the arrival of the next level.

The idea is to kill all the pigs by getting things to fall on them, knocking them to the ground or blowing them up (the colour-coded birds have different abilities). This usually requires multiple attempts as you try different demolition strategies. Once you've finished a level, another slightly harder one appears, and another, and another. It is life-stealingly addictive and hugely popular: about 30m copies of the game have been downloaded in the past year. But "Angry Birds" is more than just another mobile-phone game. It epitomises gaming in 2010 in three ways. First, it can be enjoyed by people of all ages, and by both casual and hardcore gamers. Each attempt at a level takes just a few seconds, which is great when you're standing in a queue or on a train platform. But it can be played for hours on end. It's simple enough to pick up quickly, yet also has depth and replay value for the more obsessive gamer. This is a circle that game publishers everywhere are suddenly trying to square.

Secondly, it runs on a phone, rather than a console. Games have become a key selling point for smartphones. Microsoft recently got into trouble when it implied that "Angry Birds" was on its way for phones powered by its Windows Mobile 7 software. It isn't. But who wants a phone without "Angry Birds"?

Finally, this is the perfect game for the age of austerity. It's either free (on Android phones) or a couple of pounds (on others), yet it provides as many hours of gameplay as a full-scale console game costing 15 times as much. The British prime minister, David Cameron, is among its fans; depending on your political views, this either indicates his dedication to cost-cutting – or, as the birds and pigs battle it out, mirrors the way spending cuts will pit Britons against each other.

Rovio, the Finnish developer behind "Angry Birds", is rushing out a range of tie-in cuddly toys for Christmas. Which sounds like game over. The search is on for the next breakout hit.

Angry Birds is available on Apple iOS devices, Android phones, Palm webOS devices and high-end Nokia smartphones

JEWELLERY

In your hands

Bespoke jewellery is not only for the super-rich. **Maria Doulton** picks out four designers who help clients express themselves in gold, diamonds – and bone china

A PIECE OF jewellery that's designed just for you. It's a pleasant thought. Yet many people would no sooner think of asking a jeweller to make them a ring – or a necklace, or a pair of cufflinks – than asking a mechanic to build them a car. Perhaps lack of faith in our own taste puts us off, or they feel that commissioning is the preserve of the super-rich. In fact, paying a jeweller to make something, either from scratch or by reusing stones from an existing piece, doesn't have to be expensive, or complicated – although it may take months rather than weeks before you see the finished object. If you've got an elastic budget, then the best big jewellery houses take commissions worth tens, or even hundreds, of thousands, but there are plenty of independent designers who'll do the same for far less – Annie Banian, whose work is on the right, takes commissions for as little as £80.

Where should you start? Guilds and associations – such as ADOR in Italy (www.ador.it), the Goldsmiths' Company in Britain (www.thegoldsmiths.co.uk), and the Contemporary Jewelery Design Group in America (www.cjdgjewelers.org) – tend to have searchable databases of their members, many of whom take commissions across a variety of prices. Whoever you choose, it's vital that you like their existing work: ask a designer to step too far outside their comfort zone and you risk a clash of wills and mediocre results that won't hold their value.

Be prepared for an element of negotiation. Particularly at the higher end, jewellery-makers have a tendency to think of themselves as artists, with all the temperament issues that that implies: one of the world's most sought-after and secretive designers, known by the acronym JAR, will only make pieces for the few punters he's taken a shine to. Equally, though, many will expect you to provide the first spark of an idea. Hannah Martin (see page 48) advises her would-be commissioners to do some creative homework. "You need to bring an idea to the first meeting," she says. "It could be a picture you particularly like, some clothes, or you could even bring a piece of music." If you fancy a necklace that looks the way Purcell sounds, you now know where to go.

Annie Banian *New life for granny's china*

From unpromising beginnings – shards of discarded tea-services – Annie Banian creates jewellery as delicate and refined as a cup of Darjeeling. "I have always been a tea-lover," she says, tracing her interest in china back to her time at university in Buckinghamshire. For commissioned work, she relies on customers bringing ceramics for her to transform. "Almost everyone comes to me with a story," she says. "They might ask me to turn their grandmother's cherished willow tea cup into a memento they can wear all the time." She is never sure, as she cuts into the porcelain with a handsaw, if she is breaking up a valuable piece. "But I feel I'm giving the china a new lease of life, so I'm happy to go along with my client if they're willing to accept the risk."

Because of the materials she uses, every piece Banian makes is by its nature a one-off – from a bangle made of a teapot handle to a china pendant hung on pearls. Commissioned or not, her work has a distinct theme running through it: a gentle, moonlit feel, accented by silver mountings and a palette that is largely white and pale blue. It wouldn't suit those wanting to make a big, knockout statement, and its longevity seems uncertain – can jewellery made of china hope to last? Banian claims it will, arguing that, despite its frail look, porcelain is surprisingly robust: "After all, the original pieces were used for ages, and they survived fine."

Commissioned pieces from £80. www.anniebanian.com >

RIGHT Back-stamp china and silver necklace, on freshwater-pearl rope, £350

PHOTOGRAPHS **DIVER AGUILAR**

CROWN
DEVON
MADE IN ENGLAND
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Wendy Yue Partywear for triffids

> Lined up on the glass shelves of Annoushka, an independent jewellery boutique in central London, is a series of extraordinary rings: pulsating with colour and complicated life, they look like something a triffid might wear to a party. They are the work of Wendy Yue, a Chinese designer who spent several years working behind the scenes at leading European jewellery houses – she is, she says a little coyly, unable to say which, "for legal reasons" – and now has her own workshops in Hong Kong. From here she produces small collections of wildly fantastical pieces such as the Annoushka rings shown here. These can be adapted, in a very minor way, to order; but for anyone willing or able to track her down in Hong Kong, Yue will also create one-off pieces from scratch.

You have to be ready for her, however: her elaborate and occasionally humorous aesthetic won't suit wallflowers. It tends to the hothouse – a green garnet lizard peeps slyly over the edge of a lushly carved coral lotus, pavé diamond leaf forms bubble like lava over a centrally mounted tourmaline. "My inspiration could be an antique table, a Chinese house or a European church," she says. "My designs are a little crazy, different from commercial jewellery." For commercial, you could read classic. Her existing collections sell well everywhere except Asia, where, she says, tastes are "too conservative".

The fecundity of Yue's imagination makes her an interesting choice for a bespoke commission, but also a challenging one: she does like to lead the way. "I can't really have clients tell me how to design," she says, "unless we have a special sort of chemistry." Chemistry permitting, her clients tend to bring her a stone of some kind: diamonds and pearls from an old brooch, a chunk of unusual-shaped coral, or even, in one case, a piece of rock blessed by a monk in Tibet. Then they stand back and let Yue's imagination take off – though she does say she will let them see a colour sketch before she gets going.

The process takes up to three months and involves a lot of e-mailing, because Yue spends much of her time travelling. But it shoudn't cost much more than a ubiquitous "commercial" solitaire ring – and the resulting piece will be far less predictable.

Commissioned pieces from around £7000
wendy@diamondtree.com.hk +852 214 28 188
Yue for Annoushka rings www.annoushka-jeweller.com >

TOP 18-carat gold and jade "Fantasie Swampland" ring, £9,900. FAR RIGHT 18-carat gold, aquamarine and tourmaline pearl "Fantasie Garden" ring, £7,900. NEAR RIGHT 18-carat gold and pink tourmaline "Autumnal Orb" ring, £17,000, all from Annoushka

Hannah Martin *Spiky personalities welcome*

> At the top of a steep flight of stairs in east London, Hannah Martin works at wax carvings, sketches and prototypes, creating edgy, urban pieces that she describes as "luxury for the villainous and elegant". Marketed for men, but worn by more than a few women, her designs have a hint of erotic tension: spurs, thorns, leather thongs, manacles, lustrous black pearls and studs make you think of pirates, gangsters and fallen rock stars. Especially the latter – Martin designed her latest off-the-peg range with Pete Doherty, of the Libertines and Babyshambles, and stars don't come much more fallen than him.

Martin graduated from art school in 2005, shortly after winning an industry award for cutting-edge design. From there she went straight to work as a consultant for the *haute joaillerie* ateliers at Cartier and Givenchy in Paris, where, she says, she learnt to pay extreme attention to detail. The clean-lined execution of her own collections, which she's been making for the past five years, demonstrate that rigour alongside a cool modernity. "I want to create the beauty of high jewellery," she says, "but in pieces that are relevant to a new audience."

Not everyone will find her work beautiful: it's certainly not pretty-pretty. But her choice of materials – typically yellow gold given a macho edge with black diamonds, orange or blue-black sapphires, and curves of polished smoked topaz – has a deliberate, sophisticated sharpness that suits people with a bit of spike in their style, and their personality. So while engagement rings are Martin's most common commissions, she has had plenty of unusual requests: she once made a tiara out of fossilised shark's teeth for a client. "I'm fond of the creative challenge of commissioned work," she says, "though if it's going to be successful, the trick is never to make something you don't like."

Commissioned pieces from £1000 www.hannahmartinlondon.com

RIGHT 18-carat yellow gold "Shackle" bangle with orange sapphires, £7,500, leather wrist rope with 18-carat yellow gold detail, £1,465

RIGHT 7.43-carat pear-shaped diamond and pearl necklace, mounted in platinum with freshwater pearl and a pavé of grey and white diamonds, on an ivory silk rope, $480,000

Sotheby's Diamonds *And melted-down bayonets*

Should you ever find yourself in possession of a spare lottery win and an irresistible urge to buy a big rock, Sotheby's Diamonds in New York would be delighted to help. Its bespoke service takes the few who can afford it right through the process of creating one-off pieces of jewellery, from selecting a milky-skinned chunk of rough diamond to finalising the design it's set in.

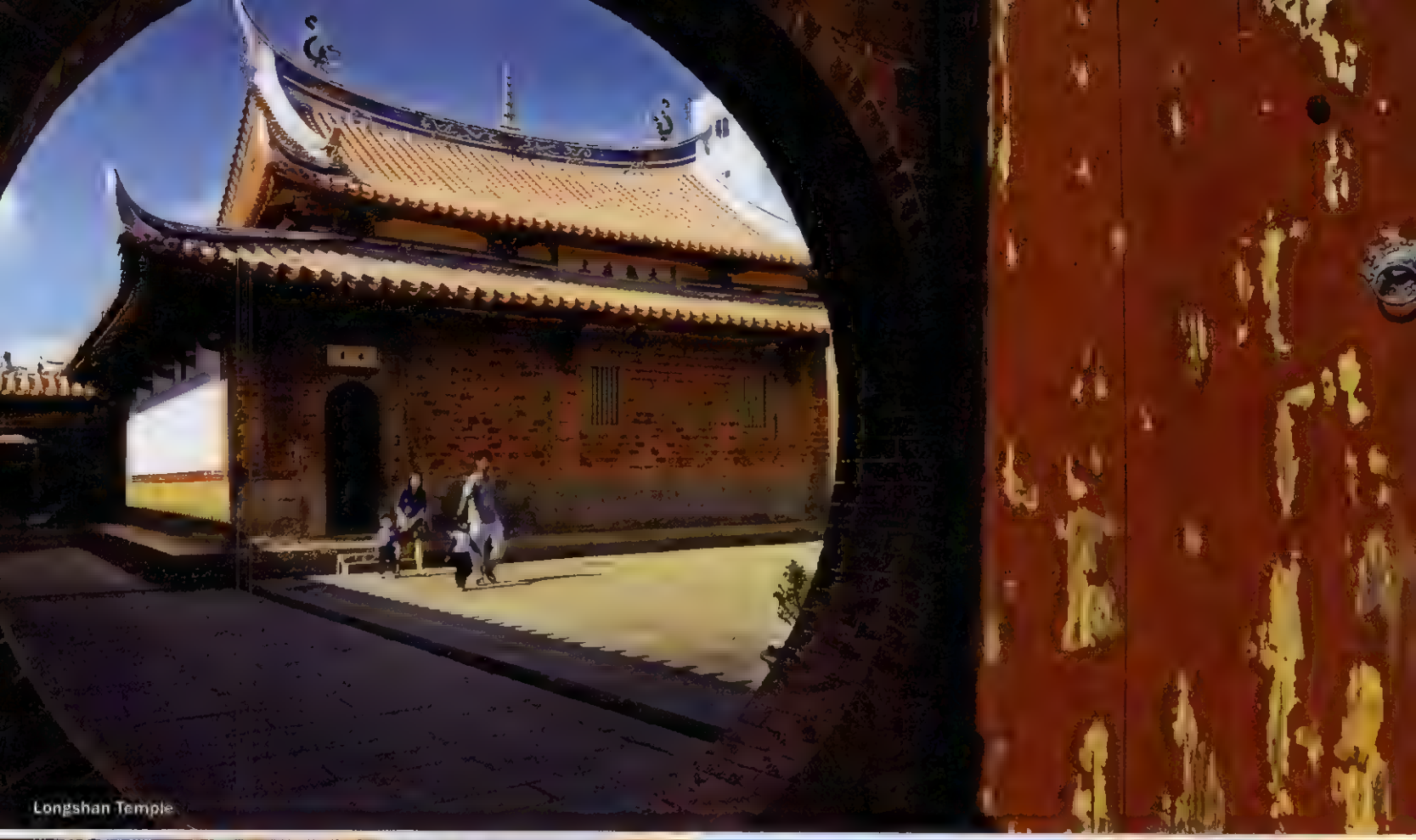
The stones will come courtesy of the Geneva-based, 70-year-old diamond house Steinmetz, which specialises in cutting and polishing large diamonds – in the past, it's put both the Steinmetz Pink and the De Beers Millennium diamond to the wheel. The design will be the work of James de Givenchy, a 47-year-old Frenchman (and nephew of the couturier) who has lived and worked in New York since the 1980s.

He seems to have absorbed much of New York's Gotham-does-Deco aesthetic. He likes to offset as-near-as-dammit perfect, high-value diamonds with grittier materials, such as gunmetal, rubber or wood. "I try to make the diamond stand out", he says, "and give it an identity by making it into a piece of art." Art? Well, maybe; but the results are different. In the past, he has set a huge diamond like a drop of syrup into the bowl of a steel teaspoon, or sculpted a tree of wood, then set pear-shaped diamonds, leaf-like, at the tip of each branch. More recently, he mounted two oval 6.04-carat diamonds in a pair of earrings made of steel from melted-down bayonets. "I mainly use first- and second-world-war guns," he says. "But Japanese are the best. I find them on the internet."

From this it should be obvious that de Givenchy is not the man should you want a simple pair of diamond cufflinks. Nonetheless, "sometimes my customers do attempt to go for a classic design. I try to re-educate them, and understand who they are and what they want to project." How thoughtful. "Yes," he says. "I should be awarded an honorary degree in psychology." ■

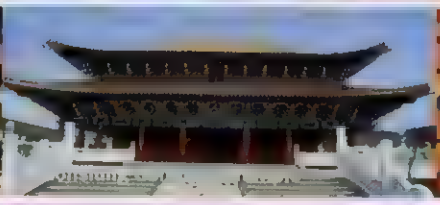
Collection from $50,000 commissions, POA www.sothebysdiamonds.com

HAND MODEL: JAMIE DONAGH MAKE-UP ARTIST: HALEY MASKALL



Longshan Temple

Taipei 101



Taiwan Ba

Taipei City Skyline

Cosmopolitan flair with local charm to spare

There's a marvellous duality to Taiwan's cities. Rapid expansion over the past two decades has brought the island world-class cuisine, a dazzling array of luxury shopping, and stylish watering holes. Yet amidst the cosmopolitan offerings, a parallel universe of bustling street markets, colourful temples, and traditional spas remains. Take in the best of both worlds in Taiwan.

Temples and shrines, skyscraper skylines

Buddhist and Taoist temples dot the cityscape, and are frequented by the full spectrum of Taiwanese locals, from the gangly teenager to the besuited executive. The museums in Taiwan are some of the finest repositories of ancient Chinese art in the world. At the same time, contemporary arthouse cinemas and independent bookshops flourish.

The modern skylines provide a unique backdrop for a distinctive Taiwanese night out on the town. At the street level, a warm glow shrouds the traditional night markets, where hawkers in family-owned stalls tout their wares. Alleys upon alleys are filled with the sound of good-natured bargaining, and an escape to a cosy teahouse or cafe is nearly always at hand.

The island is home to a plethora of spa resorts, all easily accessible to a casual visitor. One's troubles melt away in the spas filled with natural hot spring water, which can be coupled with an expert massage. And the shopping is fabulous. A new generation of fresh Taiwanese designers is setting up shop with an eye for glam detail and a commitment to quality.

Night market bustle, gourmet-seeking hustle

The food in Taiwan is perhaps the most interesting and consistently delectable one can find anywhere. High standards and a culture that revolves around eating have given rise to an explosion of variety, influenced by Chinese, Japanese and local Taiwanese cooking techniques.

Many of the best chefs in Asia have set up shop in Taiwan, where fresh ingredients abound and creativity is encouraged. Harsh competition and demanding clientele have resulted in unparalleled quality in places ranging from the humble breakfast vendor to the trendiest gourmet bistros. Here, you can find renowned Chinese restaurants, such as dumpling house Din Tai Fung, down the street from stalls serving Taiwanese specialties such as gua bao—meltingly soft pork belly wrapped in a steamed bun—or fragrant beef stew with hand-pulled noodles.

Chic coffeeshops, where one can find what the Wall Street Journal calls "Asia's best cup of coffee", co-exist alongside elegant teahouses pouring the finest oolong tea in the world. Exotic fruit such as mango, guava, loquat and lychee, always in season and bursting with flavour, are served in a hundred different ways you never thought possible.

So see for yourself—in Taiwan you're spoilt for choice. Find cosmopolitan flair with local charm to spare.

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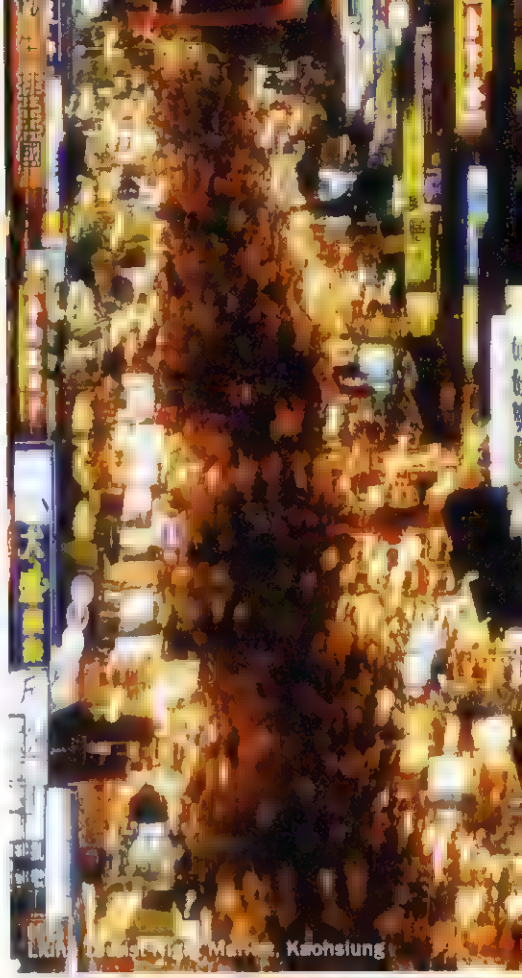

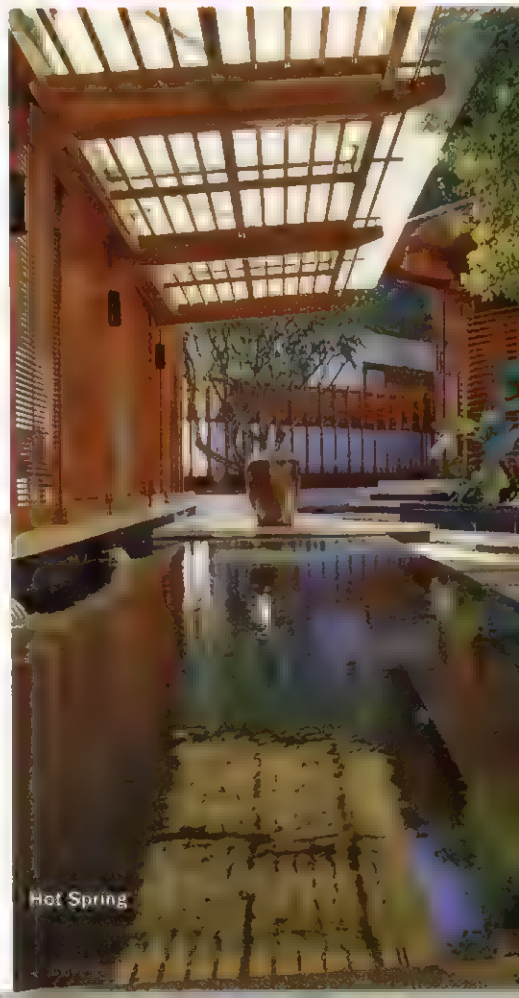

Rebecca Willis *Applied Fashion*

These shoes are made for dancing – or how to dress feet up, without falling down

When people discuss what causes the worst hangover – red or white wine? the grape or the grain? – they never mention high heels. That is an oversight. For occasional heel-wearers like me, the morning after the night before is often distinguished by tingling leg muscles, crushed toes and a twinge in the small of the back. Evidently the experts, those women who run around Bambi-legged in heels all day long, don't have this problem, but I've always assumed that when they remove their shoes their feet are stuck in position, like Barbie's. Mine go flat to the ground. But whenever I vow to put on sensible flats and kick my party heel-habit, I think I can do it...until the next invitation drops through the letterbox.

In the morning you get dressed, but for parties you dress up; and "up" is the operative word. When was the last time you went to a party – and I mean one with a certain sense of occasion – and saw a woman in flats? Exactly. But high heels raise a lot of questions, as well as your height above sea level. Why do we want to be taller? Why are we stuck in a Mannerist era that prizes elongation and distortion? Why is it acceptable for women to wear monster heels while short men are sniggered at for relatively modest ones? (Louis XIV, not a tall chap, started a vogue for men's heels, but it didn't last.) More darkly – and vats of feminist ink have been spilt on this subject – what do high heels *mean*? Let me answer all of these questions with another, easier question. Which is more elegant, a giraffe or a hippo? I'll give you a clue. It's the tall one.

It appears that, as long as women want to appear graceful, heels will exist; the enduring question is how best to wear them. Here are some simple sums for making party heels add up. Short cocktail dress + boots = cool. Short dress + dainty shoes = ladylike. Short dress + chunky heels = funky.

A floor-length dress asks for heels as high as possible to create the illusion of a classical column (but too-high shoes, in which you have to stand with your knees bent, are always ugly with anything). Below-the-knee hemlines need interesting and preferably revealing shoes to sidestep the ageing-hippie look. Strappy sandals with tights are questionable, unless you are young and going for a touch of grunge; likewise tights that are darker than your shoes.

Perhaps the simplest solution of all is the Party Boot. Whenever I can, and especially if dancing is threatened, I wear boots: they encase the foot and are more stable; they are warm; and if you want to wear arch supports or shock-absorbing gel pads there is no chance of them showing or falling out. I am indebted to Prada's stretch-fabric boots – in many styles, some bought on eBay – which have flexible rubber soles, and to two pairs of boots by Sergio Rossi, one made (how?) of elasticated leather.

My other heel tips – and I don't mean the rubber bits that get ripped off in street gratings – are to do with gradient, weight and balance. Thank goodness for platforms, which give height without the sensation of standing on a black run. My highest heels, a pair of matt gold sandals by Lanvin, have a 12cm heel (I know, ridiculous) but with a 3cm platform as well, I hardly notice I'm wearing them. For the first half of the evening, anyway. They are also light as meringue (the Holy Grail of platforms, ever since Ferragamo used wine corks to create the first lightweight ones in the 1930s): each shoe weighs 206 grams. By comparison, my grey-and-aubergine satin platforms from Ash not only weigh 256 grams, but are far less comfortable because there is too much weight in the heel. Balance, as Evangeline Blahnik once told me when I was a young Voguette breathlessly snapping up a bargain in a Manolo sample sale, is all, and her brother spends aeons making sure he gets it just right.

Recently I overheard a woman in a shoe shop lamenting that she couldn't walk in a pair of skyscraper boots. The assistant replied: "Well, they're not *for* walking." I think that's going a bit far. My list of things not to do in heels includes: running, walking on cobbles (particularly in wedges, when you get a see-saw effect) and taking public transport.

Nor should you rush. I know a woman who broke her ankle falling sideways off a pair of mules, and another who broke her shoulder when she caught her heel in her trouser hem. Both were doing the school run at the time. On a less dramatic health note, and as my mother taught me, always touch your toes (knees straight, mind) after removing high heels, to stretch your Achilles tendons back to their proper length. Otherwise you really might end up with feet like Barbie. ■

ILLUSTRATION BILL BROWN

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THE LINE OF BEAUTY

Feathers

Whether fragile or dramatic, ethereal or earthy, feathers have added something of the avian to centuries of human costume. **Helen Gordon** lets her imagination take flight

The Wilton Diptych (detail) c1395
According to St John Chrysostom, a fourth-century Archbishop of Constantinople, the wing of an angel is not a literal appendage. "The wings attributed to these powers have no other meaning than to indicate the sublimity of their nature," he wrote; you can almost hear his impatience. But earth-bound humans have always associated feathers with the Higher Powers, from the winged slippers of Hermes, to the immortal beings of Blackfoot tribal legend who communicated via raven feathers. St John's was a fruitless mission: even in his day, Christian artists had already given up trying to depict featherless angels, and by the time the Wilton Diptych was painted for Richard II, no self-respecting heavenly messenger was without a pair of wings.

Tatanka Iyotake (Chief Sitting Bull) c1880s
For much of history, it was the men who wore the feathers – big, bold feathers that were just waiting for Freud to come along and analyse them. Knights on horseback and swashbuckling musketeers attached flamboyant plumes to hat or helmet. Masai warriors in the Rift Valley and Xhosa tribesmen in southern Africa wore feathers into battle, where they both distinguished friend and intimidated foe. Among the Sioux tribes of North America, an eagle feather such as Sitting Bull's may be presented in commemoration of a feat of personal bravery. Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar, but a man's feather...

Black roll-neck dress, £16, by Tu at Sainsbury's (www.sainsburys.co.uk); black leather gloves with iridescent cock-feather trim, £545, by Ann Demeulemeester at CoutureLab, www.coutureLab.com; black leather boots, £812, by Ann Demeulemeester, www.anndemeulemeester.be; feather hairpiece, stylist's own

Photographer Rick Guest
Stylist Olivia Pomp
Hair and make-up Nicky Tavilla
Stylist's assistant Charlotte Barrett

Melissa Hamilton 2010
Designers remain as fascinated as ever by the transformative power of feathers. Here, Ann Demeulemeester's elbow-length gloves, fringed with darkly iridescent quills, add wings – of desire? – to Melissa Hamilton, a Royal Ballet soloist who, suitably enough, dances "Swan Lake" this winter.

Swan Lake *Royal Opera House, London, January 22nd to April 8th*
www.roh.org.uk

"The Peacock Skirt" Aubrey Beardsley, 1894
A proper femme fatale is always well dressed and Beardsley's illustration of Salome – drawn in lip-licking detail for an edition of the play by Oscar Wilde – is no exception. But her clothes tug in two directions. On one hand, the splendour of her flowing, peacock-patterned gown, the circlet of feathers in her hair, and her effervescent feathered fan are all suitably suggestive of royal status. On the other, peacock feathers have often been associated with the occult and the bird's distinctive round markings are said to symbolise the evil eye. The result? You sense that, for John the Baptist, this woman may not be 100% good news.

>

"Woman with Hat and Feather Boa" Gustav Klimt, c1910

Around the time of this painting, fashionable women appeared to be engaged in a sustained campaign to eradicate the avian population. No well-dressed hat was complete without an array of plumage so massy that each year millions of birds were turned into millinery; several species were hunted almost to extinction. It's heartening, then, to think of the group of British women who, moved by tales of orphaned chicks starving in the nest, formed a new Society for the Protection of Birds. The RSPB (it received a royal charter in 1904) is the ancestral home not of twitchers, but of ladies who lunch.

Anna Pavlova c1920

Pavlova's last words were "Prepare my swan constume". She had danced "The Dying Swan" around 4,000 times without, apparently, getting bored; as a result her name is now synonymous with a certain ideal of feminine grace, one as fragile and romantic as white feathers. This is a photograph of her with her pet swan, Jack. It's a pose that would be echoed years later by the Icelandic singer Björk, who donned a swan/tutu hybrid for the 2001 Oscars, and proceeded to lay a trail of eggs along the red carpet

Sally Rand c1930

Feathers in the bedroom: excitingly risqué or just plain camp? With their blend of straightforward glamour and ironic outrageousness, feathers keep us guessing. And keeping 'em guessing was the stock-in-trade of burlesque queen Sally Rand, who shimmied across the stages of 1930s America alternately protecting and (almost) revealing her modesty behind two large ostrich-feather fans. Her costume here brings to mind the peek-a-boo naughtiness of a showgirl's dressing room, but Rand's fan dance was actually a surprisingly elegant affair – more "Ostrich Lake" than striptease.

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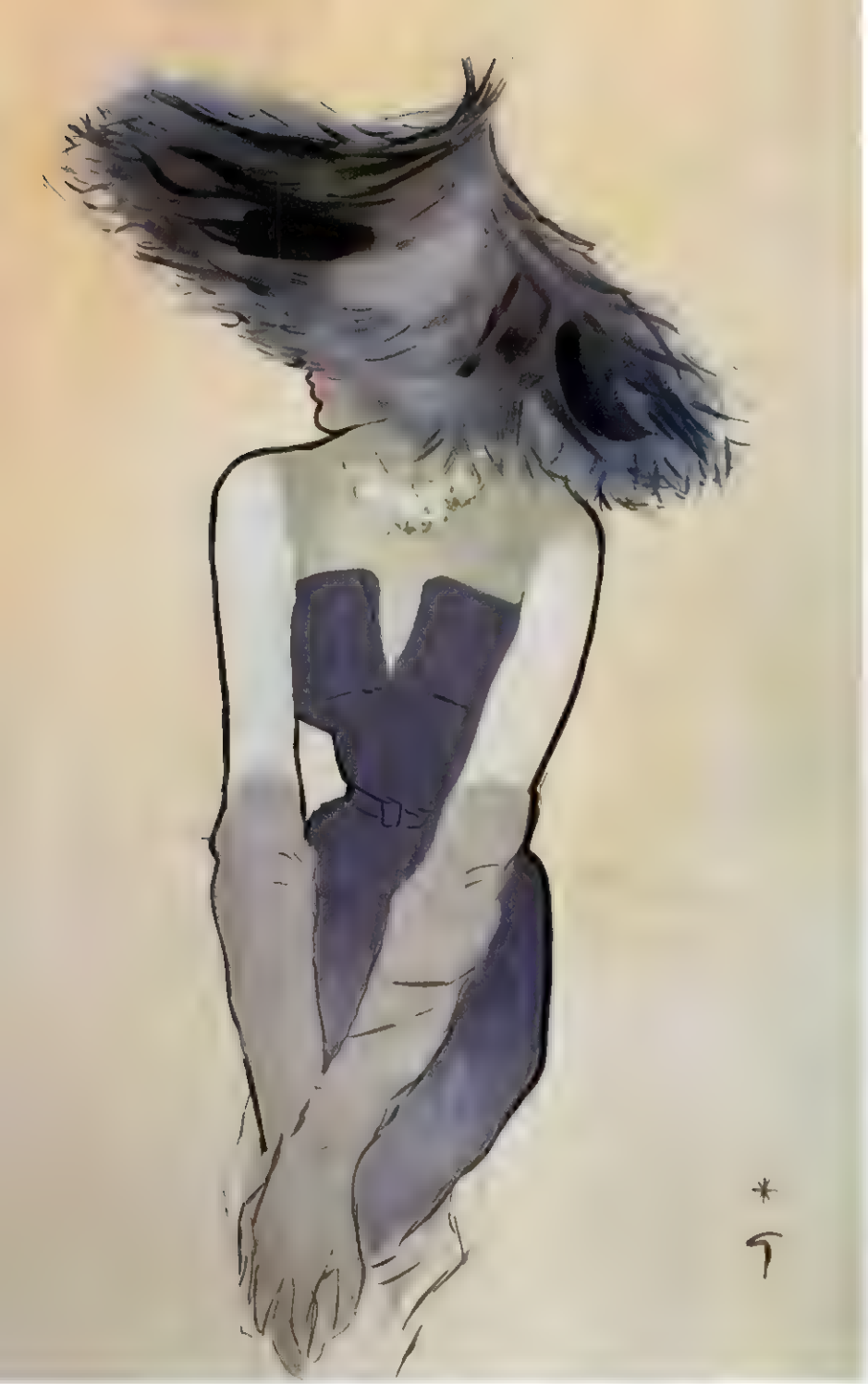
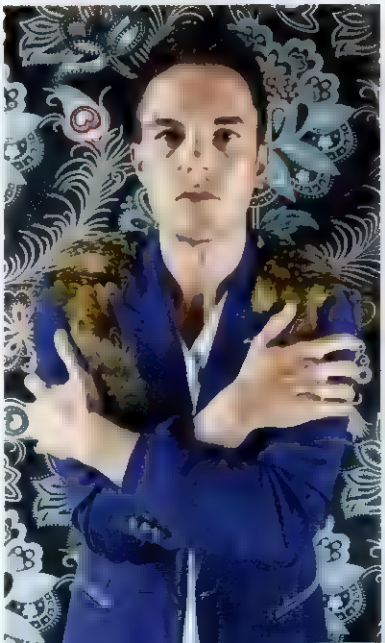


Isabella Blow Steven Meise, 1993
In her feathered headpiece, Blow, the British stylist who died in 2007, looks something like a Valkyrie, poised for take-off from her stepladder. These are powerful feathers that, like the work of her sometime protégé Alexander McQueen, suggest a personality at ease with the dramatic. But then no one ever put on feathers because they planned to take a seat at the back.

Feather hat and dress
René Gruau, 1949
Why is Gruau's illustration of this Christian Dior outfit so fabulous? It's all about contrast: the sleek lines of the dress with its nipped-in waist set against the sweeping cone of soft, soft feathers. What, though, do these feathers say about the woman underneath? Do they indicate submission, a desire to be hunted and fought over like some exotic avian prize? Or is it all about peacocking, a confident display of mating prowess? Difficult to say – but when clothes look this good, it's a shame to get caught up in a sociology lecture. Just enjoy.



Brandon Flowers in feather epaulettes
Shoot for *Paper* magazine, 2009
"I don't know if I could get up in front of 70,000 people at festivals without my feathers on," Brandon Flowers told *Q* magazine early in 2010. In recent years the Killers' frontman has taken to channelling the spirit of Roxy Music-era Brian Eno – the period when Eno's look was half man, half crow – via the medium of a dead partridge. "When I get into the jacket I feel good and strong and...triumphant," he explained. "It's the old cliché of putting the mask on." Not unlike a Masai warrior or a Vegas showgirl, Brandon Flowers hides behind the screen of a good set of feathers. And the crowd goes wild. ■

THE SCEPTICAL SHOPPER

Sustainable fashion

It's a buzzword of the moment, but is it also a contradiction in terms? Our undercover reporter goes in search of true sustainability

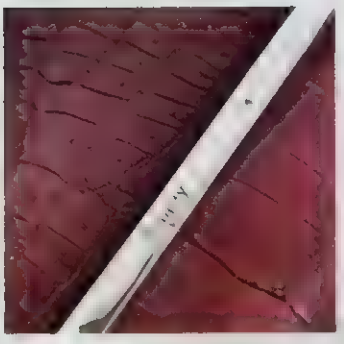
BUYING TRULY SUSTAINABLE fashion is a huge challenge. Sustainability means using resources in a way that does not impoverish the planet for the next generation. Fashion, on the other hand, is wedded to novelty and consumption, neither of which mesh naturally with the concept of sustainability. So it should be no surprise that early attempts at eco-chic were largely green window-dressing. Rather than asking tough questions about their materials, designers in the 1990s seemed more interested in turning out collections of dingy, natural-fibre clothing that made wearers look as if they lived in a field. Only now are questions such as how a material was produced, how much energy will be used to take care of it, and what happens to it at the end of its life beginning to echo through the industry.

So which materials should the sustainably minded seek out? A proto-green fashionista is likely to head off in the direction of organic, ethical or fair-trade natural fibres. They're trotting down the wrong catwalk. It is eco-hogwash to boast that something is better because it is made from natural or renewable fibres. Cotton may be natural, but most cotton consumes large quantities of pesticides, fertilisers and water during production. Organic cotton makes no promises about whether nasty chemicals were used in dying and finishing, and fair-trade cotton has lower environmental standards than organic. Furthermore, organically grown cotton plants tend to be less productive, which can drive farmers to hack out new agricultural land from wilderness and forest. GM cotton, which requires fewer pesticides, may be more sustainable than organic – but no eco-clothing company will touch it.

There are increasing worries, too, that most of clothing's environmental impact comes from the energy and water involved in washing and drying. Clothes made from bamboo or linen may sound more whole-

Coat, Maison Martin Margiela
This 1950s-look baize coat from Margiela's menswear line uses sheared Canadian beaver on the collar. Canadian beaver fur comes from sustainably managed, wild animals; almost half of the local trappers are aboriginal, so groups such as the Cree are able to make a living while protecting the wilderness. *£1,365; www.maisonmartinmargiela.com*

PHOTOGRAPHS **NEIL MERSH** *STYLIST* **BEATRICE HURST**



some, but synthetic fabrics rarely need the attentions of an iron, or the enviro-horror that is a tumble-dryer. Plus fibres that are, essentially, made from plastic are easy to recycle: the clothing company Patagonia has used recycled plastic bottles to make its fleeces since the 1990s, and re-recycles earlier generations of fleeces. New technology means that recycled polyester fibre, which saves energy and water, has now crossed over into general use and can even mimic very fine fabrics such as chiffon. Recycled cottons, too, have similar resource-saving benefits and are worth seeking out.

Upcycling – where waste products are converted into products of higher value – is also taking off. Niche designers turn left-over salmon skins into swimwear, while on the British high street a collaboration between the upcycling designers From Somewhere and the supermarket chain Tesco has seen discarded fabric from roll-ends turned into a collection of dresses in very of-the-moment colour blocks.

As for the animal kingdom, leather is problematic. Some green dressers argue that most leather is just a by-product of the meat industry. The truth is that the meat and leather trades are economically intertwined, and all the environmental issues that come with raising cattle for meat – such as habitat loss, emissions of greenhouse gases and resource use, not to mention the overuse of antibiotics – also apply to leather. So an alternative option is to look for skins that have a positive impact on habitat and wild-animal numbers.

Crocodilian skin, particularly wild alligator, is one of the great success stories in sustainable wildlife trade. Many species of crocodiles, caimans and alligators are now thriving where they were once threatened, thanks to a strictly controlled, sustainable trade. Buying alligator from America makes a direct contribution to marshlands that are vital habitats for wildlife, millions of migratory birds and many endangered species. And most of Louisiana's 4.5m acres of alligator habitat are privately owned, so trade is essential for supporting these areas and their rich biodiversity. Wild skin gives a more direct benefit, but alligator farmers in Louisiana pay fees to support the alligator marshes, so farmed alligator is also beneficial. Look for a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) certificate with your purchase, as this is proof that the source is legal and sustainable.

FROM LEFT

Felt hat, Pachacuti
Pachacuti, certified by the World Fair Trade Organisation as following sustainable environmental and fair-trade practices, uses local sheep's wool to create its natty felt fedoras. Production water is cleaned and recycled, and dyes are free of heavy metals. *£32.90; www.panamas.co.uk*

Alligator bag, Asprey
This classy, berry-coloured clutch from the British luxury brand Asprey is farmed alligator; wild alligator would be even better, as buying it gives more support to marshland in Louisiana and Florida. *£3,900; www.asprey.com*

Vicuna scarf, Esgym
Vicuna products that are sold with a CITES certificate – like this over-size, tan-coloured scarf from Esgym – support the animal in the wild. The fibre is lighter and softer than cashmere; it's also more expensive, but there's little else that feels as pleasurable to wear. *£480; www.guanacosales.com*

Mid-length dress, Tesco
A bi-coloured, body-con dress from Tesco's "From Somewhere to F&F" line that is both flattering and upcycled – made using obsolete textile stock, damaged or end rolls, and pre-consumer waste. *£18; www.clothingattesco.com*

For similar environmental reasons, there's an argument for wearing wild beaver or muskrat fur. In Canada, these animals are abundant and managed sustainably – so though some animals die as a result of the trade, the larger population, and its habitat, benefits from it. Plus the skins are durable, long-lasting, and make the epitome of what's known as "slow fashion" – items that cost more, but which can be repaired, repurposed, adapted or traded to give a longer life. Admittedly, none of these wild-animal products has solved the environmental downsides of tanning, dying and production – but that's also true of similar products that don't have such environmental upsides.

Still uncomfortable? You could try vicuna, an incredibly fine fibre sheared from a camelid that lives in the Andes. It too was once threatened but after a trade ban in the 1970s, the population recovered and it went on to be successfully managed by local communities. Trade with a CITES certificate is legal and sustainable, and supports this animal in the wild by fending off threats such as habitat loss and poaching. A cheaper alternative is a wild silk scarf – silkworms cultivated in open forest also encourage forest preservation.

Finding – and affording – these products is the tricky bit. Few mainstream designers use beaver fur, preferring instead to fluff up their collections with intensively farmed fox and rabbit. One leading American house, whose rails are currently hopping with rabbit-embellished clothes, even told me, with some pride, that they had "never, ever" used beaver. Crocodilian skins tend to be used by the highest of high-end houses: Hermès sells an exquisite pair of narrow-cut Mississippian alligator trousers, but you need a second mortage to afford them. And though the labelling on clothes has by law to be accurate, there's often confusion on the shop floor about what's what. In one ultra-cool boutique in London, I was told that a cowl-necked cape was "definitely beaver". When I pointed out that the label said it was nutria fur, I was told first that nutria "refers to the colour", then that the nutria is "a kind of beaver". This was about as biologically accurate as saying a goat is a kind of sheep.

Yet it's worth persevering. The green pound, euro or dollar has never been more powerful, driving progress towards sustainable fashion. Buy well, and we'll all prosper. ■

Marcelo Papa

A winemaker from Chile wears a suit as smooth as a glass of Syrah

THE MAN

For a man in charge of making nearly 42m [illegible] a year at Chile's Concha y Toro estate, M[illegible] remarkably unflustered. Whether he's [illegible] cuvées for customers, if the stress of producing all [illegible] With his [illegible] Latin [illegible]

[illegible] all of Chile's wine regions, not just one."

THE SUIT

The trick with Papa's suit – at least according to its tailor, Timothy Everest, who made it as part of his [illegible] capsule collections for the high-street retailer Marks & Spencer – is all in the fabric. "It has a gunmetal sheen to it, almost like mohair," he says. "So the whole suit looks expensive, even though it's anything but." Meanwhile the low break in the jacket lengthens and slims the torso, while the curved shawl collar adds a touch of dash: Papa looks cool, but not flash. Was he pleased with it? "Oh yes. As soon as this is over, I'm going to buy one to take home." – TIM AT[illegible]

THE DETAILS

Blue single-breasted suit, £199, by Timothy Everest for M&S (www.marksandspencer.com); pale blue shirt, £160, by Canali (www.canali.it); yellow silk pin-dot scarf, £25, by Ede & Ravenscroft (www.edeandravenscroft.co.uk)

PHOTOGRAPHER ALEX LAKE
STYLIST CRYSTAL[illegible] CLORY [illegible]
Stylist's assistant [illegible]

DESIGNED FOR PERFORMANCE.
ENGINEERED FOR ELEGANCE.

GLAMOUR DOUBLE DATE

Self-winding mechanical movement
Double date window at 12
Small seconds hand at 6
Domed sapphire crystal, screw-down crown
Waterproof to 100 m, steel case 42 mm

TUDOR

TUDORWATCH.COM

TUDOR WATCHES ARE AVAILABLE AT OFFICIAL ROLEX RETAILERS.

Appleism

Googleism

One is a gadget-maker, the other a search engine – but now they are at odds. **Robert Lane Greene** on a clash of cultures

ILLUSTRATION **RICHARD ROCKWOOD**

When Apple opened a new store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan in 2006 it received an unusual complaint. Not the usual New York variety – you're blocking the view I paid good money for, or you're gentrifying the neighbourhood I just discovered. No, this new flagship store was criticised by an Islamist website. The steel-and-glass cube, the zealots complained, was meant to invoke the obsidian cube at the Kaaba in Mecca, and insult Islam.

The story was ridiculous – it was one extremist website (albeit a big one), and the clever fanatics running it had only seen the cube with a black tarp over it, while it was under construction. A number of New York Muslims stood up to say that they loved the new store. But it isn't insane to call Apple's stores Meccas. Beautiful inside and usually outside too, they are temples to devotees of Apple's gorgeous products. Unlike most gadget-makers, Apple sells more than sleekly designed toys. It sells a way of life and a way of being. Call it Appleism.

Appleism isn't quite a religion, but it features an almost godlike leader, Steve Jobs. And he even came back from the dead – fired by the board in 1985, he was rehired after a slump in 1997, and revived Apple's fortunes. Many fans view Apple with devotion: Tony Curtis, who died in October, was buried with his iPhone, like a pharaoh anxious to update his Facebook status from the afterlife.

With any faith, it is fun to focus on the fanatics, but not very illuminating. On a recent trip to the Fifth Avenue store, not many faces fitted the stereotype of Apple partisans as hip, rich, Western youth. There was a man who looked like a diplomat with the United Arab Emirates' flag on his lapel. A gaggle of teenage boys from Brazil horsed around in Portuguese. A red-haired youngster put down his Good News Bible to play an online game called "Combat Arms". A middle-aged couple used the Bed, Bath & Beyond website. Apple's success has transcended the asymmetrical-jeans-and-black-framed-glasses market. It is now a movement for the masses.

Inside the store, most of the devices could be picked up and played with instantly. This is a smart move by Apple: it must wear out a lot of inventory, but it hooks the would-be buyer, and makes every store a hang-out, like the record shops of olden days. Only one place was inaccessible, thanks to the two-deep crowd that surrounded it: the iPad table.

The iPad, the tablet computer Apple launched in April, has been a phenomenon, selling 7.5m units in six months despite early scepticism, despite a $500 price-tag for the version with no 3G connectivity, despite the fact that it does little that other devices (e-book readers, games consoles, Apple's own iPhone) didn't already do. The iPad was Apple's typically bold bet that it can create a brand new class of thing and people will gobble it up, almost because it was made by Apple. Apple, which stopped calling itself "Apple Computer" in 2007, now has three signature devices that are not Macs – the iPod, iPad and iPhone. It wants to be with you everywhere.

Unlike most gadget-makers, Apple sells more than sleekly designed toys. It sells a way of life and a way of being

That brings it into conflict with another company that did not set out to make mobile gadgets, but which now wants to follow every step you take. Google began as a smarter way to find things on the internet; it is now a cloud of services that pervades every aspect of our lives. We google a good restaurant, google reviews of it on other websites, find it on Google Maps, google to check if the train is on time, and Gmail our friends to let them know we might be 15 minutes late.

Increasingly, we may do all of these things on a smartphone powered by Google's Android operating system. Google makes no actual phones itself. But as it has licensed Android to more and more phonemakers, it is, for a company that makes no gadgets, the biggest competitor to the world's most successful gadget-maker. Google has taken a big bet on making Googleism something we walk around with too.

It wasn't always so. Only a year or two ago, Apple and Google were so comfortably different that Google's chief executive, Eric Schmidt, was able to sit on Apple's board (from 2006 until 2009). "Steve [Jobs] and I are very close personal friends," Schmidt said this summer. "I believe he's the best CEO in the world by any measure." Their companies could have been a match made in heaven: Apple's gorgeous devices running Google's miraculous services. But smartphones proved too attractive for Google to leave the field to others. Android is now the bestselling smartphone system, after passing sales of the iPhone late in 2010. Jobs implied that Google had violated a tacit division of turf, pointing out at a conference in June, "we didn't go into search" and "we're not going into search". Radiating self-belief as usual, he told the same audience that he would not be removing Google searchboxes from Apple's devices, saying "right now, we have the better product". >

CORBIS

The big Apple
Fifth Avenue store

Bosses – and symbols
Steve Jobs of Apple (*left*), with Eric Schmidt of Google, in 2007

> The two companies have taken entirely different approaches to the mobile war. Apple's Apple-made devices allow only Apple-approved applications (apps) on the handset. By contrast, now that it has moved into the phone business, Google gives Android away– it does not sell it – to be installed on dozens of phone models made by a host of phonemakers, including Sony, Motorola, Samsung, LG, HTC and others. Android's code is open, and the phonemakers can tinker with it to suit their needs (though Google tries to maintain a basic set of standards, so that an app built for one Android phone will work on another). And anyone who can create an Android app can get it into Google's Android Market, the equivalent of the App Store. Apple is gorgeous but far more sealed and controlled. Eric Schmidt talked about the difference in July when he visited *The Economist* in London. "Google has a completely different world model," he said. "The Apple view is coherently closed. Ours is the inverse model: the web, openness, all the choices, all the voices. And that experiment is running."

It's an old trick to make the boss of a company a symbol of its culture, but these two make the temptation irresistible. Jobs, the undisputed leading light of Apple, is a superior, difficult control freak who disdains the press, unless he is instructing his public-affairs team to leak a story, or holding a grandiose press conference. He wears the same thing every day (a black mock-turtleneck and Levi's 501 jeans), just as Apple's toys come in a small and carefully compatible variety. Apple under Jobs has barely ever released a dud product.

Google, by contrast, has no Jobs, but a quirky triumvirate of Schmidt, the CEO, and Larry Page and Sergey Brin. Page and Brin are Stanford graduate-student nerds of a typical California vintage who remain on staff to animate Google's innovation, while leaving the running of the company day-to-day to Schmidt, a suit-and-tie CEO. Google makes its money learning about you from your e-mail, your internet searches and your phone, and then selling that information to advertisers. Its founding mantra was "Don't be evil", something its staff still take seriously. But Schmidt seems to have a new standard: "Don't be creepy". He startled commentators in 2009 by saying, "If you have something that you don't want anyone to know, maybe you shouldn't be doing it in the

first place." Apparently trying to allay fears that Google has no boundaries, he tried again in late 2010. "Google policy is to get right up to the creepy line and not cross it," he said, apparently unaware that this is about the creepiest thing the boss of an omnipresent technology company can say.

Google, a herky-jerky place compared with Apple, tends to put something out there and see what happens. Gmail, its hugely successful e-mail system, was released to the world in beta (ie, testing) mode and stayed that way for years. Google Wave, a wildly complex e-mail, messaging and collaboration tool, was taken up by few. Google Buzz, a social-networking site, was a privacy disaster because it made users' frequent contacts publicly available. Such is the product cycle of a place that encourages staff to spend one day a week on personal projects, and glorifies the hacking, see-what-happens approach of the nerd over the exquisite work of the designer.

As different as they have become, Google and Apple sprang from the same soil: California's Silicon Valley. Tales from both companies suggest that many of the engineers and programmers at one could have worked at the other: Apple's Mac-builders playing Nerf-ball tag in the offices in the early 1980s could have been Google's founders building server racks from Lego in the late 1990s. The sheer number of companies created and destroyed in the Valley, perhaps the world's most innovative place, encourages a "don't tell me it's never been tried" attitude that has driven both Apple and Google.

But both companies started to show what they would become early on, too. Jobs says that the most important class he took in college (before dropping out) was calligraphy. A designer at heart, he headed the team that launched the first Macintosh computer. As other members of the team worked nights and weekends to make the thing perform better, Jobs demanded tiny changes to the shell, tweaks to bits and bezels that the others could barely see. Beige and boxy as it may seem today, the Mac was a design revelation in 1984. It was the world's first commercial computer with a screen that looked anything like the way yours does now.

As different as they have become, Google and Apple sprang from the same soil... Many of the engineers at one could have worked at the other

Google's DNA began to manifest itself early too. The fount of its ambition was Larry Page's boast to an adviser that he was going to download the entire internet onto his computer. Buying and wiring together stacks of cheap generic computers was the key to making that happen: most outsiders don't appreciate that Google is as much a feat of physical engineering as of software cleverness. It now handles a billion searches a day, and when did you last see it crash?

Both companies were the little guy once: Apple was David aiming his catapult at Microsoft, and Google was the second-mover hoping to topple the might of Yahoo! Both were so good that they became huge, which led them to clash swords as they moved into new products and fields. Today Apple and Google compete with their browsers (Safari and Chrome), photographic software (iPhoto and Picasa), e-mail (me.com v Gmail) and cloud computing (MobileMe v iGoogle). Apple's iTunes is now the world's biggest music store; Google is replying with Google Music. Apple, after being sniffy a couple of years ago, is selling e-books through iTunes; Google is quietly digitising every book it can get its hands on for Google Books. Google owns YouTube, the world's biggest streamer of video, but Apple too (with iTunes, the iPad, iPod and Apple TV) has begun to see delivering moving pictures as a core skill. In April, Apple in turn went straight for Google's financial core, launching iAd, a mobile-advertising platform.

The urge for growth has led both into public-relations disasters in China, an irresistible market and manufacturing heartland. Google submitted to the censors by tailoring its Chinese search engine for years, before publicly renouncing that policy in January 2010. Apple has squeezed costs by using Foxconn, the Chinese manufacturer that has such an unhappy workforce that it has installed nets below high windows, and has a boss who says "a harsh environment is a good thing". With its "2 billion armpits to deodorise", as marketers like to say, China has lured two American giants with purist images into tarnishing themselves. Now, the staggering scope of another emerging market of billions – handsets, not armpits – is finally bringing them to clash in the open.

Scott Adams, the creator of the Dilbert comic strip, writes a blog of pointed commentary, largely aimed at techies. Last year he depicted technology-tethered humans as *de facto* cyborgs: "If a cyborg can remove its digital eye and leave it on a shelf as a surveillance device, and I think we all agree that it can, then your cellphone qualifies as part of your body." He sees the phone as an exobrain: "Your regular brain uses your exobrain to outsource >

> part of its memory, and perform other functions, such as GPS navigation, or searching the internet. If you're anything like me, your exobrain is with you 24-hours a day."

If smartphones are going to be our exobrains, for the next few years at least, Apple or Google will be behind most of them. Expectations for Microsoft's Windows Phone 7 are modest. Only BlackBerry, which makes a very different, work-centred device, is in the same league. No one else has anything like the wind behind Google's and Apple's backs.

Certainly, Apple and Google have the most distinct propositions for your exobrain. Apple's system, however much it may be criticised for being closed, offers a set of sleek devices, a gleaming little family. The iPod, iPad and iPhone are all an extension of the Mac, turning photos, videos, music and movies into a single river of pleasure that we can dip into on the train, on the sofa or on the move. Because it has the same iOS operating system as the iPod and the iPhone, the iPad had hundreds of millions of potential customers who already knew how to use it. Apple's exobrain offering is beautiful hardware and intuitive software that, most of the time, is even more of a joy to use than it is to look at.

The downside, the thing that Apple hopes you don't think about, is that you are utterly in its hands: if you change your mind, there is no easy way out of Apple's system. The tunes and movies you have bought from it can only be transferred from an iPod to third-party gadgets by a cumbersome workaround, and until recently even that was impossible. Apple's offerings hardly ever let you down, but when they do, you are stuffed, left with sunk costs and a reputation as an Appleist that you would publicly have to disavow. The only carrier Apple originally offered its American iPhone users, AT&T, was loathed by many Apple fans, but they had nowhere else to turn. The lure of Appleism is such that most users didn't mind that their iPhone was a lousy phone. Steve Jobs claimed that any network would have been overwhelmed by eager iPhone users, as AT&T's was. He'll soon have a better idea about that, as the iPhone finally gets a second carrier (Verizon) next year.

Google asks for a different brand of faith. You can choose your carrier, and your phone manufacturer. Independent app-makers will sweat night and day to get themselves on your phone without Google needing to cull them. As Android gets bigger, the collective wisdom of the internet and its users will make those apps better and better. Google itself asks for next to nothing. It won't take money direct from your pocket, as Apple is delighted to do. Google doesn't want to sell you your exobrain. It wants the contents.

Armed with those contents, it will charge someone else to serve you advertisements. They're really quite small, are they not? Google made a promise to itself early on that all ads would be text-based and short. So long as you're not bothered by the fact that they are tailored to you, you lose nothing.

The tailoring can be comical: a colleague who writes about cricket, and so tends to mention the Ashes, now finds his searches accompanied by ads for crematoria. But it can be more sinister than that. At a swanky party for a New York-based think-tank last year, I met an impressive, if cocksure, army major, a Green Beret and Iraq veteran. We chatted and exchanged cards, and I thought nothing of it. For a year afterwards, he popped up again and again in Google ads as I browsed the internet. He ran for Congress in Missouri, and I couldn't escape ads asking me to elect him. I don't live in Missouri, but somehow Google seemed to know that I'd met him.

BEFORE THEY CAME to their clash in your pocket, Appleism and Googleism had both made big claims on your faith. Apple, quite simply, changed the way we think about gadgets. Cliff Kuang, a design editor for *Fast Company* magazine, says that in the past, when there was a new gadget, "one person in your family knew how to use it. That is something Apple completely changed. No longer is there an expectation that you're going to have to learn to use an Apple product."

Indeed, my new iPad came with no instruction booklet at all, no tangle of wires, no handful of drivers on CD-ROMs. The tight black cardboard box, itself engineered so that the top needed a little force to come off with a satisfying shhhhh, disclosed the iPad and a single cord. No wading through badly written orders. Just pick it up, peel off the plastic screen and press one button that whispered "Welcome. What would you like to do?" This ease is such that Jobs was probably onto something in defending AT&T: iPhone users, according to *Consumer Reports*, run five times more data through their phones than other smartphone users. Appleists aren't fiddling with their Apple devices. They're using them.

And, quite often, using them to google. It's worth noting that "to apple" is not a verb. Just as we forget how

impenetrable computers and gadgets were before Apple raised everyone's game, we tend to forget that before Google, search engines were terrible. The big internet companies were expected to be portals – single web pages that helped you find media, shopping opportunities and weather forecasts while offering services like e-mail. But Yahoo!, AltaVista, Excite and the like couldn't possibly organise the teeming millions of pages on the internet. Google obliterated the portal by uncannily finding the thing you were looking for and bringing it to, or near, the top of the first page of results every time. Google made the internet the internet, as we know it today. Before it came a series of gaudy homepages, dancing hamsters and misused first-mover advantages. Now, content people actually want rises, and rubbish lingers safely unseen on the fourth page of results. Pleasing Google's algorithm has become mission-critical for retailers, entertainers and politicians, all climbing over each other to reach the top of those pages.

Apple, too, helps the best get bigger. iTunes has done more to invigorate music than any record company in the past 20 years. In February 2010, the ten-billionth song was sold on iTunes. In New York or London, Apple's little white wires sneak from the ears of seemingly half of those riding the Tube or subway. But they haven't changed the pattern of consumption – they have taken what it is, and made it more so. Downloading has boosted popular singles, just as it has dented albums. The average number-one single in Britain sold 60,000 copies a week in 2005, according to PRS for Music. Today, that figure is 93,000. Some had hoped that the cheapness of maintaining vast catalogues of music would boost the obscure and esoteric. The "long tail" theory, as advanced by Chris Anderson of *Wired* magazine, had it that while the top 20% of songs or books or whatever would account for 80% of sales, there were still rich pickings in the niches. But PRS for Music found just 2% of the offerings accounting for 80% of sales.

Whether it is Apple or Google doing it, helping the big get bigger is hardly a popular enterprise. But with the power these companies hold, no matter what they do they will be the targets of criticism. In a twist, Google is inching away from giving the entire internet a say in what rises to the top of a given user's searches. Gradually, Google is customising results by geography, by the cookies already on a user's computer, and even by the contacts in your Google account, if you have one. This, it hopes, will make search results more relevant. Some media-watchers argue that living in your own Google bubble is a threat to culture and even to democracy, as an individual user is never inconvenienced by surprises. So far, the search results are thought to vary only slightly from user to user. Eric Schmidt, it can be assumed, doesn't find this creepy.

For all the evidence they are in a death match, there is still symbiosis as well as competition between Apple and Google. Plenty of us use Google and Gmail, iTunes for music, an iPod for the gym and an Android phone. Google is still the default search engine on an iPhone. And the Android tablets that are just beginning to appear will follow the iPad's lead as much as Android phones did on the iPhone. The world on our screens is far bigger than two companies, as shown by Amazon with its books and e-readers, Facebook and Twitter with social networking, and eBay and Craigslist with their classified ads. Neither Apple nor Google has grabbed much, if anything, from that lot.

But Apple's and Google's war for the phone in our pockets is the biggest clash since Apple v Microsoft for the space on our desktops. By the end of 2011 smartphones will outsell ordinary phones, and by 2012 they will outsell PCs. Cloud computing may well replace the system whereby our photos, songs, documents and everything else lived on our own personal devices. At the same time, some observers expect search-based revenues to peak soon. One of those observers is Jobs, who says flatly that "on a mobile device, search hasn't happened. Search is not where it's at." This leaves smartphone apps as the crucial gateway to the cloud – and Apple and Google chasing each other's revenues by filling every corner of our lives with their working, browsing, listening, viewing and networking options.

Their approaches are clearly distinct. And while competition may make both better, it is hard to see both succeeding equally, the world evenly split between the perfectionist, sleek and controlling approach of Apple, and the experimental, fast-moving and open ways of Google – the small choice of flawless devices made by Apple, and the vast array of Android phones guided by Google. Will the Facebook generation, oblivious to privacy concerns, give the win to Google? Will those who have grown up expecting devices that just work tilt the field for Apple? In the answer lie not just billions of dollars, but the way we experience the world around us. ■

That look,

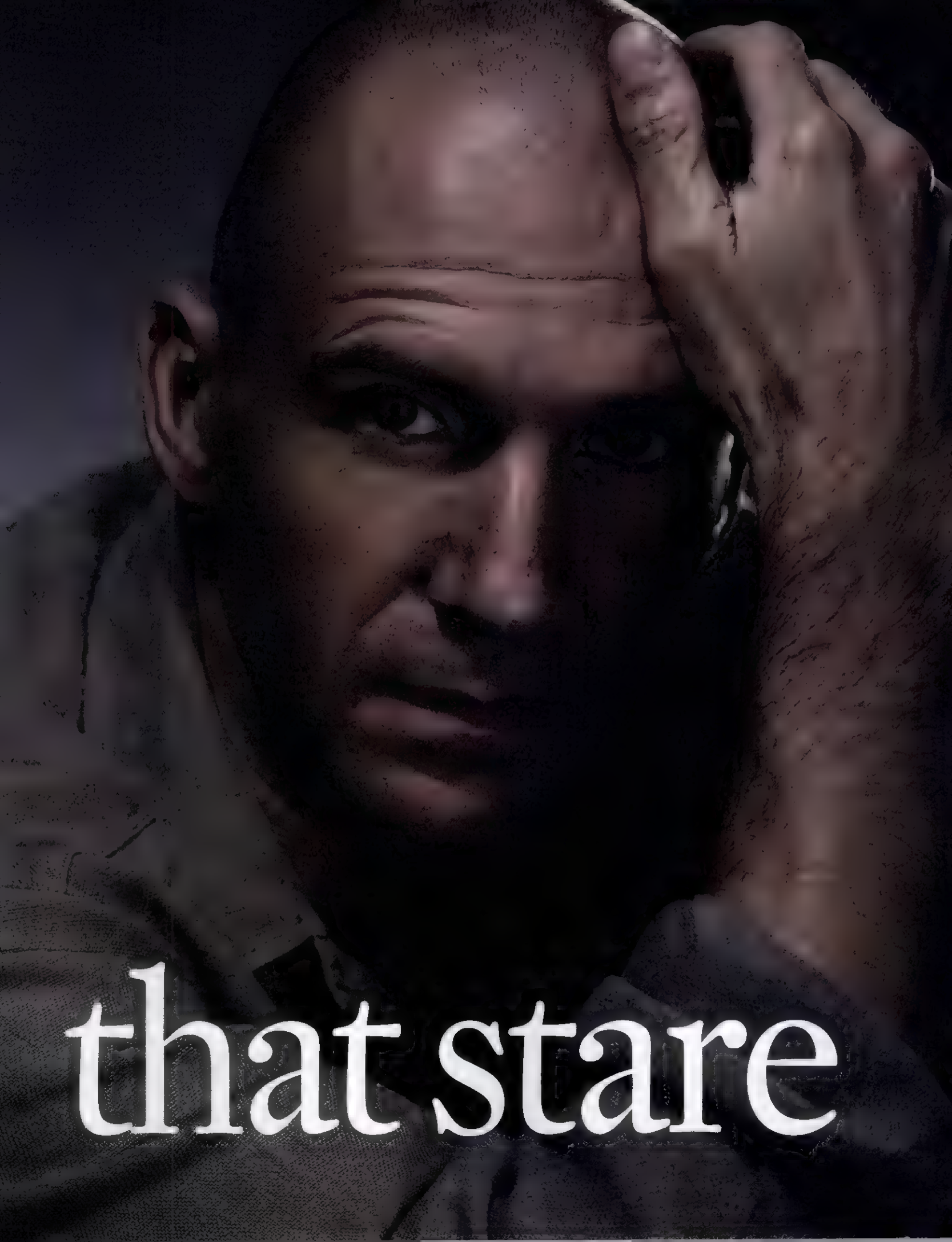
Once a Hollywood heart-throb, now an outstanding character actor, and lately in danger of being best known as Lord Voldemort, Ralph Fiennes has spent much of the past two years battling to make his first film as a director. **Julie Kavanagh** followed him through that time, interviewing Fiennes, his friends and his sisters, to track down the source of his gifts – and his demons

THE BEAUTIFUL FACE is gaunt, with fatigue-bruised eyes. A sideways glance, barely discernible, and the minutest curl of the upper lip let you know that an amusing private memory has been triggered. This is Ralph Fiennes, aged 29, as Lawrence of Arabia, watching newsreel footage of himself with guerrillas in the desert. His look seems to check if the moment has resonated with anyone else – though just putting it into words destroys the speed and subtlety of the execution. Then a stage actor with hardly any screen experience, Fiennes announces himself in a single close-up as a born movie star, able to seduce the camera while holding back a hinterland of mystery.

The BBC film "A Dangerous Man: Lawrence after Arabia" (1992) gave Fiennes the first of many signature roles as torment personified. Lawrence was a shattered personality, so shamed by his illegitimacy and homosexuality that his back was criss-crossed with self-inflicted weals. His eyes are likened in the film to "the blue sky shining through the empty sockets of a skull", an effect captured by the turquoise irises of Peter O'Toole 30 years earlier. Fiennes's eyes are even more eloquent, revealing a netherworld behind the façade. It's an astonishing performance, and when it reached America two months later the *New York Times* and the *Hollywood Reporter* were ecstatic. "That day", says the producer, Colin Vaines, "we had calls from Ridley Scott, Robert Redford and Spielberg." The calls led to "Schindler's List", which made Fiennes's name, and "Quiz Show", his first leading role in a film, and then came "The English Patient", which turned him into a heart-throb – Lawrence with a whiff of Rhett Butler. In four years he had made three major movies: a Shakespearean actor, known only to the cognoscenti, was now an international star.

Today, aged 47, Fiennes is no longer considered A-list by Hollywood. "He's not hot," says one studio executive. "Someone like Liam Neeson has a far more commercial sensibility in the films he takes on. Fiennes is a thesp." The occasional shot at the mass market has backfired on him: "I felt completely lost as that Cary Grant type in 'Maid in Manhattan'," he says. "I didn't know what to do." But in roles that call for a transformation Fiennes is superb – never more so than as the disconcertingly fleshy, sadistic SS officer in "Schindler's List". "It freed him," says Peter Eyre, who played Polonius to Fiennes's Hamlet. "He wasn't a romantic lead: he had to find >

PORTRAITS JILLIAN EDELSTEIN


that stare

> something else. Olivier was said to be a character actor in the body of a matinée idol, and the same may be true of Ralph."

To watch Fiennes's films back to back is to be struck by his range, whether as the tatterdemalion clergyman in "Oscar and Lucinda" or the murmuring vagrant in David Cronenberg's "Spider". In 2008 he was both a foul-mouthed East End villain ("In Bruges") and an 18th-century duke in "The Duchess" – an unforgettable depiction of an aristocrat whose chilly reserve masked a core of compassion. In "Bernard and Doris" (2006), an HBO film little-known outside America, he was a transvestite, alcoholic Irish butler. It would have been easy to ham, but Fiennes gave Bernard a quiet dignity, edging to decadence in tentative gradations.

"Ralph has made very specific choices," says Juliette Binoche, his co-star in his first film, "Wuthering Heights", and again in "The English Patient". "He's not part of the system, he hasn't moved to Hollywood. He's decided to follow his soul." That soul keeps leading Fiennes back to the theatre. "I wouldn't have had it any other way," he says. "Theatre gives you an arena for emoting that film ultimately can't compete with – that sense of something connecting in the room."

In spring 2008, when I began shadowing him for this profile, Fiennes was appearing in Yasmina Reza's "God of Carnage", which brought out his seldom-seen comedic side, and one afternoon, on the play's suburban-sitting-room set, I watched him rehearse a Beckett monologue, "First Love", for a show in New York. The director was Michael Colgan of the Gate, Dublin, a self-proclaimed "Beckett missionary" who became friends with Fiennes through this shared enthusiasm. "Beckett has a strong sense of irony and self-deprecation, and Ralph gets that," says Colgan, who often chuckled at a wry twist of a line. With his Irish lilt and intimate, sometimes daringly sotto delivery, Fiennes made an unfamiliar text enthralling. It was like overhearing his thoughts. But his next role was Oedipus at the National Theatre – the most daunting challenge of his career – and I was intrigued to see whether this master of understatement could make Sophocles's eruptions of horror work for an audience today.

When Olivier was Oedipus, his "vast anguish" resounded, Kenneth Tynan said, in the dome of the theatre ("Some stick of wood must still, I feel, be throbbing from it"). Fiennes, who can be too analytical in his approach, knew he would have to "find the courage to take the lid off". Juliette Binoche, then appearing at the National in an uncompromising dance piece, could identify with this. "You have to reach a no-limit area. If he doesn't go that far, I'll be disappointed."

Fiennes's director on "Oedipus" was Jonathan Kent, a close friend, who had already directed his Hamlet, Coriolanus and Richard II. "What's interesting about Ralph is Ralph, and these plays are examinations of him. What they elicit –'Oedipus' in particular – is a savage and pitiless look at the self." It took years of getting to know each other, Kent says, for their artistic relationship to flourish. "The first rehearsals were like fences coming down, and then a shorthand, a trust just grew." Fiennes values the freedom Kent gives him, though pinning him down to a definitive delivery of a line can be a challenge. "You have to let him play, but Ralph can be quite contrary: if you say 'That's terrific!' he'll never do it again. To repeat it would seem like cheating."

In a National rehearsal room in August, Fiennes was called with Jasper Britton, cast as Creon, and the Chorus, a group of veteran actors, half-singing their lines. He and Kent discussed what they represent to Oedipus. "He appeals to them, he cajoles them," Fiennes said. "It's as if they're a sounding board for his soul." Even on the side, waiting his turn, he was magnetic. Everyone else in the room looked ordinary – I could imagine Jasper Britton mowing the lawn on a Sunday – but Fiennes, with a shaven head and the remnants of an Umbrian tan, prowled like a predator. He broke into weird, slow-motion exercises learnt from a girlfriend, an Israeli dancer. "I get very tense and this is good for me," he told me in the bar afterwards. "Everything has to be very loose," he said, arms flailing like boiling spaghetti.

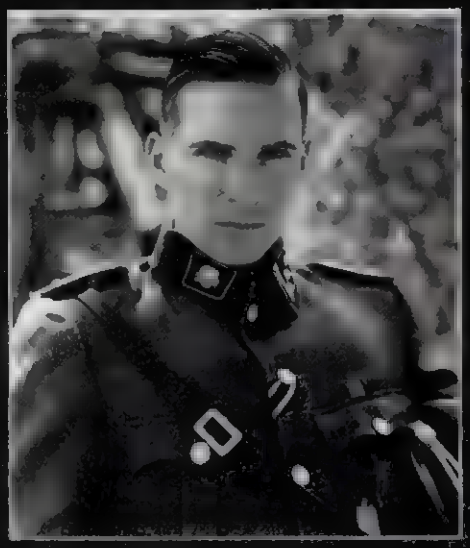
Three weeks later, rehearsing with Claire Higgins (playing Oedipus's wife, Jocasta), Fiennes began in film mode – rigorously natural, voicing confidences that make the listener feel voyeuristic. The volume rose with Oedipus's fears, the line "Not yet, not yet" acquiring a chilling, hysterical edge. A second attempt was toned down a few shades, and a third was almost euphoric. His sister Sophie Fiennes, a film-maker, says he was still experimenting three days before "Oedipus" opened. "Over dinner, Ralph recited from the beginning of the final act, and it was shattering." But at the preview I saw in October, he was not sustaining the climax. Blinded and bloodied, Oedipus demands raw, almost expressionistic emotion from an actor, and offers no props to hide behind. Fiennes, crawling on a table, was like a primordial creature, and yet somehow histrionic, unmoving. I wondered later whether the gauze and red paint covering those eyes – his most powerful instrument – were shackling him. His delivery was uncharacteristic: it came from the page, not from the heart.

In his dressing-room afterwards, wrapped from the waist down in a red towel and pouring Krug for his guests but not for himself, Fiennes was downcast about his performance and the response from what his agent called a "Mondayish" audience. "The Olivier's an intimidating theatre for a standing ovation," the agent ventured. Fiennes looked unconvinced.

The reviews were mostly complimentary, but Fiennes read only one, which wasn't – the *Observer*, which found his portrayal empty and external, "Oedipus simple" rather than complex. "He's been in a depression ever since," Jonathan Kent told me. And yet Fiennes was aware of what he calls "the curse" of a first night, which is rarely the ultimate interpretation. "It moves and mutates," he had written in *Areté* magazine in 2000. "Some nights it's flat, uninspired; the next night

Fiennes on film Phase one: "sublime casting"

Charles van Doren in Quiz Show, 1994 "Outstanding... sublime casting" (David Thomson, Guardian)


Amon Goeth in Schindler's List, 1993 "Fiennes creates an indelible character" (Variety)

Almásy in The English Patient, 1996 "Great love scenes and one of the great horizontal performances" (Thomson)

too energised, too relentless, other nights everything is in harmony." This proved true when I returned late in the run. Now Fiennes's fear was palpable, with a physical language of agony, like a Bacon painting; his barely audible "Not yet, not yet" sparking the ineffable shiver released by a great performance. The audience was silent, drawn into the moment, but at the end let rip with whoops and whistles, recalling the cast on stage again and again. Sophie Fiennes went twice and said that one performance was the most extraordinary she had ever seen. "It was not acting, it was being. It was a leap of faith, like jumping from one building to another. Ralph had dared to enter that state. Afterwards I told him, 'Jini's certainly gone to heaven now!' Because she would have loved the play, she would have loved his courage on that night."

JINI WAS THEIR mother. Jennifer Lash was the driving force of the family, a motivator for each of her seven children as well as a novelist in her own right. For Sophie, her presence was too powerful, and it was only after her death that she started making films: "I felt I wasn't being watched." For Ralph, Jini was a twin soul, a huge influence, the person who instilled a passion for language and inspired him to be an actor. Three of his signature roles – Hamlet, Oedipus and Coriolanus – are all, a family friend says, "reprises of his relationship with Jini".

Jini grew up in India, where her father was stationed, and Ralph remembers being shown photograph albums "full of Raj things like tiger hunts and polo matches". His grandfather was an army officer with a typical colonial wife, who never fully adjusted to the letdown of their return to England, declaring, "I *clapped* my hands for the first half of my life and *used* them for the second!" They had four children, all highly intelligent; one son became a theologian. Jennifer, although clever, felt at odds with her siblings, having what Ralph calls "the plunging imagination of the artist, with no analysis". She was prone to histrionic outbursts and was nicknamed "Sarah Bernhardt" by her mother – who Jennifer said was incapable of love. But there may have been a more sinister explanation for the hysteria. An unfinished play, drawing on her upbringing, includes an incestuous episode between a father and daughter, which Ralph believes is based on fact. "My mother never discussed it, but she would infer it. The story goes that she had a meltdown one day, and a Catholic priest was brought in, and finally they took her away." Jennifer, who was 16, never went back home. Years later, when she met the writer Dodie Smith, she said she rarely heard a telephone ring without hoping it would bring news of her parents' death.

At 17, she took a job as an au pair in Suffolk, to the three adopted sons of Iris Birtwistle, a grande dame who had been a literary It Girl, writing lyric poetry and developing a passion for art. Her gallery was an incubator for young talent, and she sold drawings by David Hockney when he was unknown. Spotting Jennifer's potential, Birtwistle took it upon herself to heal and educate her; she renamed her Jini and sent her to a Jungian analyst, who said, "There's absolutely nothing wrong with you." This instilled a tangible confidence, and Iris saw "a beauty come through", along with a hunger for anything creative. Jini devoured the books in Iris's library, and, while working in the gallery, discovered a talent of her own for painting. At 21, she wrote her first novel, "The Burial", a cathartic interior monologue about her childhood, dedicated to Iris.

Living nearby was a young tenant farmer, Mark Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes (a cousin of the adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes), whose portrait Iris had painted. Cine footage of him herding cattle during a spell in Australia shows a dashing figure of 6ft 4, with all the glamour of a Fifties film star. >

KOBAL, RONALD GRANT

Fiennes on stage A royal flush

Henry VI in The Plantagenets, 1988 "Astonishing. I was a rival for the part and he rightly got it" (Simon Russell Beale)

Hamlet, 1995, with Francesca Annis as Gertrude "[he] is in command from beginning to end" (New York Times)

Oedipus, 2008, with Alan Howard as Teiresias "Explosive brutality...histrionic...but hair-raising" (Independent)

> When Iris introduced him to Jini, the attraction was instant. Mark later told a journalist: "She was sitting in the library, her feet curled up under her as she always sat, and I thought, that's it." For Jini, longing to make a life for herself that could supply the love and stability she had missed, Mark was the route to it. "You don't want to be frightened of this writing bit," she told him. "All I want to do is have six children."

They married soon afterwards and Jini moved into Mark's redbrick farmhouse near the sea. Ralph was born on December 22nd 1962, Martha 14 months later. When Jini saw a notice in the *Times* seeking foster parents for an 11-year-old who needed "a home where he is allowed to read a book", she insisted that they took on Michael. "We didn't think of him as an interloper, but he seemed terrifyingly old," Martha says. In seven years, with the birth of Magnus, Sophie and the twins Jacob and Joseph, Jini had the "litter of children" she craved. Her family became everything, helping to dispel "the clouds of disquiet which all day overshadowed her". The line is from "May to October", her novel drawing on this period, which Ralph finds too autobiographical to read. It vividly evokes their crowded life:

> The rooms were empty tousled spaces, still charged with the echoes of the children's voices, and the endless hurl and bound of their bodies in and out of the chairs and into the doors and tables. Everywhere things lay about in a dervish whirl, jumpers, anoraks, books, games; contraptions and experiments: strange little clustered hoards of oddments...Their voices were sound patterns. She knew intimately the emotional range of each.

Sharing a bedroom with Magnus, Ralph was ruthless about protecting his own space – "I couldn't bear his clutter encroaching" – and, with life unfolding en masse, he longed for privacy. This was paramount to Jini too, who made a quest for solitude the subject of "May to October". "She felt there was a side of her that was not being fulfilled," Ralph says. "And being the woman she was, this frustration would manifest itself in tears and hysteria. It would be triggered by the potatoes being overdone, or the washing left in the rain. There'd be screaming and crying and slamming of doors. But my father was amazing, always stoical, and very rarely would he react. He'd say, 'You leave this to us: *I'll* get the washing. We'll all clear up.' "

"Jini desperately needed the unfaltering strength of someone like Mark," says Simon Loftus, a Suffolk friend. "He would probably have led a conventional gentleman farmer's life, but under Jini's influence he became a hero." Friends called him Abraham, because of his sense of himself as father of the tribe, unthreatened by the compelling force of his wife. "She's painting pictures, and I'm painting shelves," the father sanguinely observes in "May to October", which is dedicated to "M.T.W.F. utterly and entirely". Theirs was a unity of opposites working together, but with the farm having become unprofitable, Mark decided to submit to an artistic impulse in himself, and started working as a photographer.

In the early Seventies the family were living on the Wiltshire-Dorset border, but after accompanying Mark on an assignment in Ireland Jini announced they were moving there. "She'd fallen in love with the Irish spirit, their openness towards family," Ralph says. His parents wanted to get away from what Jini called the "achievement mania" of the English, and the idea – or fantasy – was to build and sell property in places of beauty such as West Cork, where they settled in a house by the sea. Jini planned to school all seven children herself. "We'd go for a walk and she'd pull a book out of her pocket and read us something," Sophie says. "She was a very good educator, with a sense of huge urgency. My mother came from an academic background, but she hated what she perceived as dry, complacent academe. She didn't want any of us

PHOTOSTAGE

to go to university. And although I went to some conventional schools, I was primarily educated by her. She loved poetry, and she used language as her biggest weapon."

Creativity was valued above all else; Martha, now a film director, remembers a friend asking the children what choice of career would most disappoint their parents. "One of us said, 'A bank manager'. And there were roars of laughter, because it was absolutely right." To his siblings, Jake – now working in conservation – is the rebel of the family, although Sophie insists that Jini was "fantastically supportive" of all their endeavours. She told Ralph the plot of "Hamlet" as a bedtime story when he was eight or nine, and played him a record of Olivier's speeches: she was grooming him for the stage.

A year of home education exhausted Jini, so the children went to the village school – apart from Ralph, who was sent to a private, co-ed Quaker boarding school in Waterford. "I loved it. The place was pulsating with hormones, and I had my first flirtations with the opposite sex." But the small legacy that had paid the school fees soon ran out, and he left after only a year. "From then on I don't think I ever considered that any school would be permanent, or any friendships," he has said. "I would always move on; there would always be change."

The family were now acutely short of money. "People just don't believe the penury," says Sophie, "but it was very hand-to-mouth. There was always panic." Convinced that Ireland had been a mistake, Jini took the younger children back to England, leaving Mark and Ralph in a B&B while they packed up the house. Uncharacteristically, Mark took a stand and in an emotional telephone call he persuaded Jini to give Ireland a second chance. "I went with him to meet my mother and brothers and sisters off the boat at Rosslare, and still have a graven image of her deep frustration and upset." They bought a Georgian house in Kilkenny, and both Mark and Jini took black-and-white pictures of Irish scenes which they sold as postcards: "their most commercial venture," says Sophie. The children went to the local Catholic school, but although Jini was a believer ("I love God!" Martha remembers her exclaiming), she felt stifled by the church's hold on families. By 1976, they were back in Wiltshire.

The move meant more independence for Ralph. Aged 14, he was at Bishop Wordsworth's grammar school in Salisbury, "doing my best to be accepted in a male, rugby-playing world". Martha describes her brother as "incredibly good-looking – of course, most of my friends fancied him," but Ralph claims to have suffered from the usual teenage anxieties about attractiveness. "There were furtive forages into sexual relationships, but nothing major. I did have a girlfriend for six months whom I would bicycle off to see, but she chucked me at a disco party we were giving together. I remember the humiliation and the upset...walking barefoot round Shaftesbury at 5.30 in the morning in melancholic heartbreak."

When his parents moved to London in 1980, Ralph stayed on in Salisbury, living in digs, to finish his A-levels. Although he had shown a facility for language while acting in school plays and speaking in class, he could not construct a plausible essay. "Ask me to analyse 'King Lear' and I hadn't got a clue – I didn't have that kind of mind." He got an E in English, a C in history, and an A in art, which led to a foundation course at Chelsea, and "a thrilling year". The teaching was intense, provoking him to think more broadly, and he loved London's galleries. "I felt very liberated, and would bicycle off in my dungarees covered in paint." One project was to make a version of an old master; Fiennes chose "Las Meninas" by Velázquez, which his teacher had told him had been a springboard for Picasso. "I started messing around, breaking it down into 3D, which reminded me of the little Pollock's toy theatre I had as a child – that same principle of figures in space with some dramatic charge between them." He became curious about theatre design and considered taking a course, before realising that his real impulse lay on the stage. Jini was delighted. "It was almost as if she'd been waiting for it."

Landing the part of Romeo with an amateur group emboldened him to go for a place at RADA, which he won. Martha looked at the list of names and said, "Ralph, can you see any of these people's name in lights? Imogen Stubbs! Iain Glen! *Jane Horrocks*!" Theirs turned out to be an outstanding year, but their phonetics teacher, Joan Washington, saw Fiennes as "absolutely an individual, rather than a member of the group". His gifts were obvious: "He had a voice you could imagine would make him a great theatre actor. Along with the eyes – that look, that stare."

RADA had a policy of sharing out leading roles, so none of his contemporaries considered Fiennes to be "more than perfectly OK", as the actor Neil Dudgeon puts it. "Ralph was slightly geeky, easily flustered, but likeable and charming. He was just one of us – silly, funny, talented kids – not a film star in embryo. Nobody *could* pose." All the same, Dudgeon, a working-class northern boy, formed a scathing first impression of Fiennes. "At the beginning of term the teachers called out our names on the register, and every time Ralph would say, 'It's Rafe, actually', and I'd think what a snooty wanker." Fiennes sensed Dudgeon's derision, but was also struck by his perceptiveness. "I always felt in agreement with what he said. There was an honesty about Neil which was very compelling." Fiennes invited him for a weekend in Wiltshire, where Jini was painting and looking after Sophie and the twins. Expecting a mansion, Dudgeon was taken aback to find "a tiny nursery-rhyme cottage, as if they all lived in a shoe". He was even more startled when Jini, "warm and earth-mothery, her hair in a dishevelled bun", told him, "You're crap!" She meant Krapp, in Beckett's "Krapp's Last Tape". "I fell in love that day with Ralph's parents – such wonderful, enthusiastic, life-enhancing people. They had this blazing, arty thing going, and I remember being impressed by their 'modern' relationship with Jini in her studio in the country, and Mark, Magnus, >

> Martha and Ralph in a south-London flat. It was so liberated."

Dudgeon remains one of Ralph's best friends, loyal but irreverent. At RADA, he would rag him about his feverish approach to everything he did. "In a ballet class he'd be grand-jetéing across the room with a desperate intensity. We'd piss ourselves, and he'd swear at us, but he'd be laughing. Ralph can laugh at himself very easily. I remember the time we went to Paris for a week and met two French girls in a bar. We paired off and chatted away, and at one point Ralph tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'What's French for the Kurdish problem?'" In class, Joan Washington says, Fiennes would "be the one leaning forward". When RADA's librarian gave him a copy of Pushkin's "Eugene Onegin", Fiennes was overwhelmed. "It haunted me for years."

His ardour was shared by a redhead in the year below, Alex Kingston. "She was curious and engaged with foreign literature, French cinema," Fiennes says. "She thought outside the tradition of English theatre. She had such a positive energy about her, incredibly charismatic, and she was very popular." Soon, Dudgeon says, "she and Ralph were mooning at each other. It was a likemindedness: Alex was passionate, intelligent, charming, funny, very sexy." Fiennes loved her "great quality of feminine strength", and describes the start of their affair as "very intense and romantic, very youthful".

HIS FIRST ROLE as a paid actor was Curio, a minor figure in "Twelfth Night", at the Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park, in 1985. With him in the New Shakespeare Company was John Moffatt (as Malvolio), whose conversational delivery left its mark on Fiennes, then 23: "It was incredible: his pitch was perfect." Soon Fiennes was playing Romeo, also in Regent's Park: he remembers "emoting a lot, but not being much good". Two years later, when he joined Michael Rudman's company at the National, he was still tending to "pull the choke out too far", as one observer put it. But the depth of his research was enough to convince Rudman that he was "going all the way". When he appeared in Pirandello's "Six Characters in Search of an Author", he read the play in four versions.

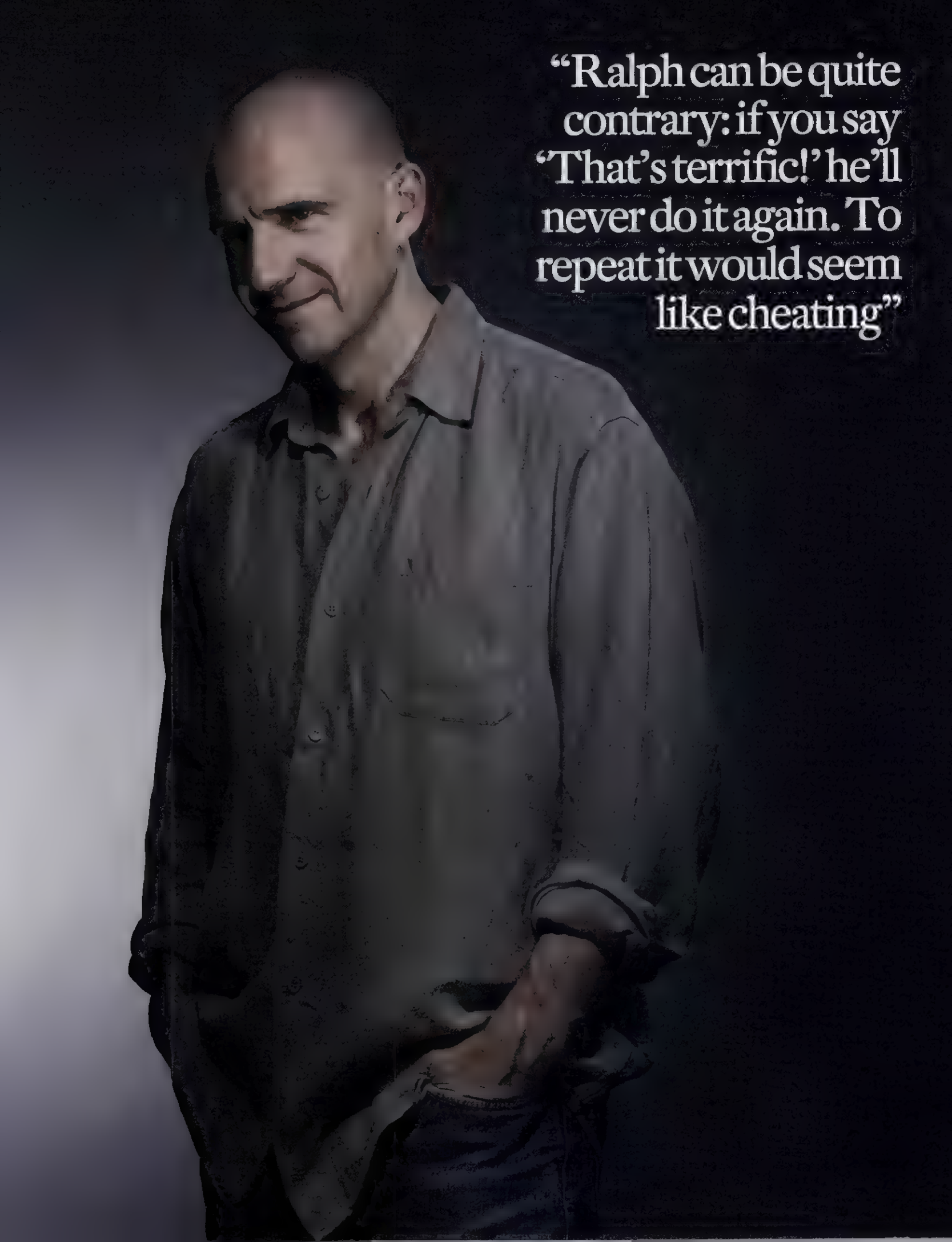
In 1988 he joined the Royal Shakespeare Company; his audition is remembered by the director Adrian Noble as one of the three best he had seen, along with Kenneth Branagh and Joanne Pearce. "He had that extraordinary focus", Noble says, "which gives amazing energy on stage and on film is hypnotic. And he had an ease with the language, which is priceless – it lets the audience involve themselves with the character." Noble, who was compressing four Shakespeare history plays into one entitled "The Plantagenets", had been struggling to find a Henry VI. "With Ralph, it was such a clear decision. Very often people want to mystify Henry or turn him into a saint, but Ralph liked him as he is, and gave him a strong moral presence. Instead of trying to complicate the simplicity of the Molehill speech, as some actors would, he did the opposite."

When I saw that performance at Stratford, Fiennes's stillness seemed to freeze the audience's breath. Martha felt the same thing. "The auditorium went deadly quiet when he came on, and I thought, 'He's holding something here.' There's a charge around Ralph – it's there when he walks into a room." Not everyone was impressed: "Ralph's so wooden, he's a fire hazard!" said a more flamboyant contemporary. But the Shakespeare veteran Brian Cox was struck by Fiennes's vocal technique. "He had a Gielgudian, tremulous quality to his voice that was traditional in a way, but unusual. There was nothing prosaic about Ralph – he was like an actor from the past."

Fiennes lived alone for his first season, renting a cottage outside Stratford; then Alex Kingston joined the RSC and they shared a cottage opposite the stage door. When she played Cordelia in "King Lear" and he was Edmund, they seemed to Martha to be "the epitome of the *jeunesse dorée*", but Ralph recalls being less happy that year. "I didn't feel my roles were as fully achieved. I struggled with Troilus, and didn't quite get my head around Edmund. I was terrible as Berowne in 'Love's Labour's Lost' – not at all relaxed. It's always painful when you know a thing isn't gelling, and people nod politely at you afterwards in the Dirty Duck." Instinctively maternal by nature, Alex "was great at looking after him," a friend says. "She was ebullient while he was moody and taciturn. If he went off into his own world, she would cover for him."

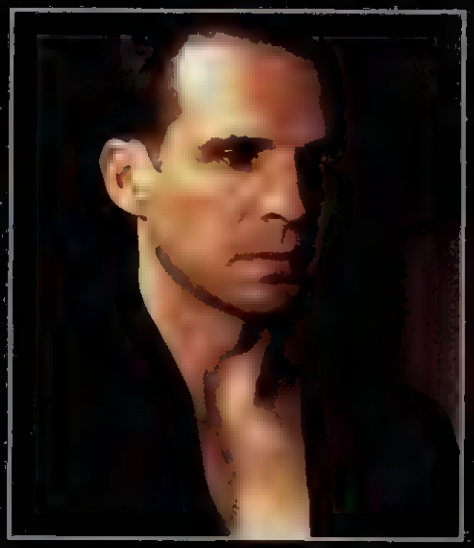
When the RSC repertory transferred to the Barbican in London, Fiennes felt "the whole thing blossom". He also appeared in his first television role, in the original "Prime Suspect", as the melancholy boyfriend of a murder victim: with his lean, poetic face, long hair and studded leather jacket, he was a Plantagenet who had landed in the wrong century. "He didn't even know he had to wait for the word 'Action!'," says the director, Christopher Menaul. Six months later, as T.E. Lawrence, Fiennes was mastering this different art, his day beginning at 6am on set and ending after the Barbican curtain-call. "He was brilliant at unlearning everything he knew from theatre – he really, really wanted to know what would work on screen," says the producer, Colin Vaines. "He immersed himself in 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom', taking it all very seriously."

Fiennes had first read Lawrence's weighty autobiography at nine or ten ("Jini had obviously given it to him," Martha says). Mother and son had made a pilgrimage to his home, Clouds Hill, and been startled by the sense of Lawrence's personality in every room. Ralph went back "and felt it again", and then a third time for a BBC series about places that had made an impact on public figures. When the script of "A Dangerous Man" arrived, it seemed it was meant to be. "My mother knew it accessed something for me. We didn't speak about it, she just knew." Mark, while always supportive, never understood him like this, Fiennes says. "He read political and military biographies, he loved James Bond and Alastair MacLean. He gave me a book one Christmas by Auberon Waugh – I didn't know what to do with it. My father didn't really hear >


"Ralph can be quite contrary: if you say 'That's terrific!' he'll never do it again. To repeat it would seem like cheating"

Fiennes on film Phase two: mixed fortunes

Steed in The Avengers, 1998, with Uma Thurman "Fiennes is like a [illegible]" (San Francisco Chronicle)



A serial killer in Red Dragon, 2002 "The diffident gallantry of Frankenstein's monster" (Guardian)

Bendrix in The End of the Affair, 2002, with Julianne Moore An "intensely romantic aura" (New York Times)

> what I was saying, whereas my mother knew what I was trying to chase, somehow. Her analysis was so acute: she'd guess your moods, pick up on your anxiety."

Wondering if this rapport was unique to the two of them, I asked Ralph's sisters if he alone had inherited Jini's dark side. "I wouldn't say for a second that it's only Ralph – *I* bloody well absorbed it!" Martha replied, and Sophie insisted that their mother's instability had affected them all. "She broke a cycle for herself, but in that exorcism we, as her children, were bystanders and are still left with her unhappiness. There are some things in life that don't go away. Catharsis happens in the theatre." For Ralph, this has indeed been the case: his access to pain and the blackest recesses of human nature has infiltrated his acting. "You get to examine things that you can't consciously confront in everyday life," he told the psychotherapist Adam Phillips in a conversation about Oedipus. "You get to unleash some really dark stuff."

It was these infernal depths, visible in "A Dangerous Man" and as a menacing Heathcliff in "Wuthering Heights", that led Spielberg to cast Fiennes as Goeth in "Schindler's List". He described seeing "moments of kindness that would move across his eyes and then instantly run cold", a paradox on which Fiennes would construct his performance. He did research at the Imperial War Museum which suggested a fractured personality, bereft of love: "I want to see if I can articulate the pain of the man," he told Martha. He "felt split about him", and showed it in glancing moments of tenderness towards Goeth's Jewish maid. As one critic wrote, "His human traits kept pulling us in just as his inhuman ones repelled us."

Fiennes had a theory that Goeth's moral decrepitude was linked to his corpulence and asked Spielberg if he wanted him to put on weight. "He said, 'Yes, yes if you can,' so I bought Complan powder from the chemist and within a couple of weeks I'd developed this soft paunch." Wearing an SS uniform for the first time gave him an inkling of Goeth's psychotic sense of supremacy. "It felt good. It felt powerful." And also icily authentic. When he and Ben Kingsley, dressed in his prison-camp outfit with its yellow star, walked round Krakow's Kazimierz quarter and were invited into the Jewish Café by its smiling proprietress, Fiennes felt too uncomfortable to accept. Filming "Schindler's List" was intense – "I don't think I've ever felt such a bonding between a crew and cast" – and he made a lasting friendship with Liam Neeson. "He was instinctively paternalistic: there's a Schindler-like nature in him." Fiennes won a BAFTA as Best Supporting Actor, and six other awards, but missed out on the Oscar for which he was nominated.

Fiennes responded to the success of "Schindler's List" by sacking his American agent and hiring one who he felt would keep him at the top. "It was then", Mark Fiennes told a friend, "that I realised how ambitious Ralph is." His son's overnight acquisition of money and celebrity wasn't easy to accept. Mark had always suffered from not being able to provide properly for his family, and he became upset, Sophie says, reading press reports about how poor they had been. "He saw that as his failure." Fame also took its toll on Ralph's relationship with Alex Kingston, upstaging the shared excitement of their start together. "It was hard," he says. "There was a sudden change in the energy of our lives. When the American media turns its spotlight on you, there's no experience like it."

Worse was to come. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1986, Jini had been in remission until now, when it became clear that she had little time left. "It was very odd to be part of this amazing success story which went hand-in-hand with my mother dying." Jini loved Alex, as did his sisters, and Ralph decided to marry her sooner rather than later. "Somehow we

KOBAL RONALD GRANT

thought the wedding was going to heal everything," Kingston has said, "but that was crazy, of course." Heady with sudden stardom, Fiennes did not seem ready to settle down. A friend remembered "going to some bars with him and thinking, 'I wish I knew you better, because I don't reckon you should be getting married.'" The wedding, held on a glorious Suffolk day in September 1993, was all the more emotional because Jini was in pain. Neil Dudgeon, the best man, sat beside her in the front pew, waiting for the bride to arrive. "When the music started, I turned round and saw Alex. She was wearing a green velvet medieval dress with long sleeves over the hands, and I said, 'Oh Jini', and burst into tears. She was the one with fucking cancer, but there she was hugging and patting me, saying, 'You've got to get up now, Neil, and give Ralph the ring.'"

Jini died in December, aged 55. As Mark hated undertakers, the family organised the funeral themselves, painting the coffin electric blue, a symbol of strength. She had seen an early screening of "Schindler's List", but did not live to enjoy Ralph's fame. "In everything I do", he told Adam Phillips, "I feel the lack of her being witness." When he played Hamlet, 15 months after her death, he told a journalist how his mother would have loved to see it. "And I sort of feel she will, in a funny way." On the first night, he reserved a seat for her.

Kent's "Hamlet" opened at the cavernous Hackney Empire in February 1995, with Fiennes as a modern, unkempt hero. For him, the play was predominantly about "primal blood relationships", and, as if in response, John Peter, in the *Sunday Times*, saw "a portrayal of pain that cannot be shared". Other critics praised Fiennes's "superb phrasing", "innumerable lights and textures", "immense speed but complete clarity". The closet scene was electrifyingly erotic, with Francesca Annis, as Hamlet's mother Gertrude, bending over Fiennes, her full breasts loose under a white cotton nightdress. By April, when "Hamlet" moved to a smaller theatre in New York, their kiss was getting longer and longer; Peter Eyre, lying under the arras as Polonius, heard a woman shout from the audience, "That's disgusting!" There was another reason for the illicit charge: Fiennes and Annis were falling in love.

Just before the Broadway run, Fiennes, living with his wife in East Dulwich, had sounded untypically domestic in an interview with the *New Yorker*. "I'm not going to move anywhere in a hurry," he said. "We're making our home really a home, like a pair of shoes that become a part of you." The year before, however, there had been turbulence, with competitiveness on Alex's side ("she was furious when Ralph praised an actress in a role she had wanted," says a colleague), compounded by Fiennes filming "Strange Days" in Los Angeles, and leading what the colleague calls "a bit of a rock-star life". Being married to a heart-throb made Alex feel insecure. "She wanted a family," says a mutual friend, "but 2.2 kids wasn't Ralph."

Brought up in Brazil, Francesca Annis was an exotic, irresistible siren, the 18-year age gap only adding to her allure. "Ralph's default position is loving older women," Martha says. "Intelligent women, opinionated women, who have lived a bit and bring a sense of humour and assurance." At 50 Annis was all that and more, combining her career with three children and a reputation for independence spiced with loucheness. The British tabloids seized on the idea of "the sexiest man in the world", still mourning his mother, taking up with a woman nearly two decades his senior, and spun themselves into what an American observer called "an Oedipal frenzy". At the mention of this, Sophie rolls her eyes. "Francesca is so not a mother figure. She's a femme fatale, a lover-woman. For a long time there was a huge bond based on their craft – Ralph was incredibly impressed by Francesca's sophisticated understanding of the theatre." Bruised to this day by the coverage, Fiennes refuses to discuss the affair. All he will say is, "Francesca is a wonderful actress – a great actress. And she was a fantastic Gertrude."

Not since Richard Burton in 1964 had a New York "Hamlet" created such a buzz. It took $1.5m in advance bookings and the first-night crowd included Lauren Bacall, Tom Hanks and Spielberg. Exhilarated by it all, Fiennes became much freer, Peter Eyre says. "I'd found something tight about him in London, but the way audiences respond in New York is so excessive, it makes English actors give out more." Fiennes won a Tony, the first Hamlet ever to do so. At the ceremony in June Alex was by his side, even though the affair with Francesca was now, as Jonathan Kent knew, "clearly what it was". In his speech Fiennes paid tribute to Kent as "my heart's friend", and after the run they went to Kent's family home on Cape Cod. "Francesca came too," Kent remembers, "And it was great. A sort of idyllic time." When the summer was over, Fiennes flew to Rome to prepare "The English Patient" – the film which, more than any other, made him a romantic lead.

In 1998 Fiennes was in St Petersburg, playing the title role in the film "Onegin", directed by Martha. Between takes, we spoke as he sat on a balcony overlooking the frozen Moika canal, a hot-water bottle under his jacket. I was there researching a biography of Nureyev, but in my then role as London editor of the *New Yorker* I had asked him to write about his fascination with Pushkin's poem. Deferring to Nabokov, who said that "Eugene Onegin" could only be appreciated in the original, Fiennes was learning Russian, although he had come to see this as a "blithely ridiculous" aim. The article revealed the stirrings of an interest in directing, describing how he had drawn storyboard pictures and written a treatment himself. His account of a visit to Pushkin's country estate was packed with evocative detail – another legacy from his mother, and one he takes for granted. "Actors and writers exercise the same intensity of imagination."

In his stiff 19th-century costume and Mr Pecksniff quiff, Fiennes's Onegin has little of the sexual power of his Hungarian count in "The English Patient", with his sear- >

> brother Magnus puts it. He has an apartment in the West Village in New York ("Sometimes I think he might make a life there"), and his retreat is a rented house near Arezzo in Italy: "I read, I swim, but mostly I go to hide." He has begun to rebuild a friendship with Annis, but he relishes not having to account to anyone. "It's the work he's married to," Dudgeon says. "He's in love with it: Ralph's spouse is his career."

FOR TWO YEARS, Fiennes's commitment – inordinate and unabated – has been to making a film version of "Coriolanus", the springboard for a new career as a director. Why this particular Shakespeare play, seldom performed and less than lyrical, should hold such a fascination, he cannot fully explain. "Except that certain parts arrive for actors – like 'Jerusalem' for Mark Rylance – and I feel I can say something about Coriolanus, express some totality about him." He admits, too, that the character allows him to explore "so much shit of my own".

Coriolanus is a fearless Roman soldier, who refuses to toe the political line urged on him by the patricians and feign humility to the plebeians – which would secure his election as consul. "He's like a jihadist," Fiennes says, "a man who will not negotiate. It's not something I can believe in myself, but that extremity is thrilling to investigate." And yet Coriolanus's absolutism sounds not unlike Fiennes. "Ralph's never swayed by any entity," Martha says. "He has a single-mindedness, a core of strength that allows him to do dangerous things and not be afraid of ridicule." The psyche of the soldier is close to his heart: as a child he drew battle scenes and dreamed of being a marine, and he remains fascinated with military strategy. But the most crucial link may be this: "There's no man in the world/More bound to [his]mother."

When he played Coriolanus on stage, in a Kent production which ran in tandem with "Richard II" in 2000, Fiennes polarised spectators. I can still picture his arrogant, narcissistic Richard, but struggle to remember Coriolanus, apart from the spittle-flying venom of his words. One critic friend, Peter Conrad, admired "the pleasure Fiennes took in being hateful – so unlike the craving most actors have to be loved: as much a self-portrait as his Onegin". Another, Alastair Macaulay, was dismissive: "You could hear everything he said, and you couldn't understand a word of it." The acoustics at the vast Gainsborough Film Studios were "horrible" for all the actors, Fiennes says, though in playing a character defined by rage his shortcomings were more conspicuous. Over the next decade the idea of playing Coriolanus in the intimate medium of film became an obsession. On camera he could contain the fury in a close-up, and show interior emotions that would not register on stage. "Shakespeare *is* internal," he says. "I'm sure he would be writing for the cinema if he were alive today."

As it happened, a Hollywood screenwriter who shared an agent with Fiennes was equally consumed by "Coriolanus", and convinced that of all the plays this one would have more power on the screen. This was John Logan, whose scripts for "Gladiator" and "The Aviator" were both nominated for Oscars. "The miraculous thing was that we were on exactly the same wavelength," Logan says, and Fiennes echoes him: "It's been completely symbiotic." They both wanted street-to-street fighting, with the Volsci presented as insurgents, and the language was to be one that film executives could understand. Coriolanus is "a sort of killing machine. A shark moving through the ocean. Ruthless and efficient"; and the great lines ("like an eagle in a dovecote, I/Fluttered your Volscians in Corioles") would be offset by 21st-century asides, such as "Menenaus consults his BlackBerry". They also agreed on the need to heighten the domestic drama at the heart of "Coriolanus" – the mother-son axis, which matches Coriolanus's love-hate bond with his enemy, Tullus Aufidius.

While rehearsing "Oedipus", Fiennes was also struggling to finance "Coriolanus". The main investor, an American billionaire, withdrew after the financial meltdown, and the project collapsed. "It didn't surprise me," said Fiennes. "I'm an untried director, I know the reality." Logan was even more pessimistic: "I would have bet against it happening. 'Coriolanus' is not only a Shakespeare play, it's one not many people would rush to see. But Ralph is the proverbial iron butterfly – gentle and nurturing, with a spine of steel."

When we met for lunch in spring 2009, Fiennes was about to go to Cannes in a last attempt to get "Coriolanus" on course for that year. His mood was sombre, but he became impassioned discussing the possibilities, putting his framing hands right up against my face. "Every soliloquy is a close-up. It's about getting into people – behind the eyes." The film would probably happen, he said, if he cast Meryl Streep as Coriolanus's mother Volumnia, but he had promised the role to Vanessa Redgrave. "I wanted her from day one. She has infinite layers of spirit going on." He was in a rare limbo; his only work that summer was recording Eliot's "Four Quartets" for Faber.

In the autumn he spent nine weeks on the permanent "Harry Potter" set at Leavesden Studios, filming Part 1 of "The Deathly Hallows", his fourth appearance as the evil Voldemort. "It's quite fun. I'm looked after; it takes the pressure off the huge anxiety." We had lunch in his trailer, Fiennes in full make-up, with a veined scalp, yellowy little teeth, and long stained nails emphasising his feminine fingers. I asked if anything was different in his life. "No," he replied firmly, "I'm a single man and I intend to stay that way. I think, 'shall I call up so-and-so?' and then I decide I'm too tired."

His fee was big enough for him to consider part-funding "Coriolanus" himself – "I couldn't bear for it to go down" – and he had used an invitation to the Belgrade film festival to scout for locations. It was Serbia's dismal, war-scarred capital that he had chosen as the "somewhere, nowhere place" he wanted – a setting that could just as well be Chechnya or Basra.

He played me the mood reel, which was brutally contemporary and included footage of the anti-Milosevic riots. "I

He became obsessed with the idea of playing Coriolanus in the intimate medium of film. "Shakespeare *is* internal," he says

On set in Belgrade Fiennes directs Gerard Butler

want to use the Serbian police who were involved as extras." Opening a folder on his MacBook, he showed me clips of the sugar factory he had chosen for the scene where Volumnia, accompanied by Coriolanus's wife and son, begs him to reconsider sacking Rome. Two stand-ins slowly walked the length of the abandoned factory floor. One was Amanda Harlech, wearing a "Dr Zhivago" hat and ankle-length coat, the other the film's Serbian line producer, Angie Vlaisavljevic, whose faith had touched Fiennes: "the most extraordinary friend".

By October his luck with "Coriolanus" had changed. The producer of "The Duchess", Gaby Tana, who is half-American, half-Serbian, had been intrigued by Fiennes's concept of the play as a political thriller and found a young investor in Belgrade to put up significant money. With three producers now involved (including Colin Vaines, from "Lawrence after Arabia"), the next step was to halve the original budget and reach a figure that was marketable. A last-minute coup, in studio terms, was the casting of a Hollywood action man, Gerard Butler, as Tullus Aufidius. Fiennes had managed to keep on board his dream team, which included the cinematographer from "The Hurt Locker", Barry Ackroyd, chosen for his documentary realism; Susanna Lenton, a script editor whose work Fiennes had admired on "The Constant Gardener" and "The Reader"; and Joan Washington, his voice coach from RADA days, to steer the actors to naturalism. On January 7th Fiennes flew to Belgrade, moving into a white, light, split-level flat in Strahinjica Bana – the Shoreditch of Serbia – to begin "the miracle" of shooting "Coriolanus".

EIGHT MONTHS LATER, pushing his bike along the pavements of Soho after dinner, Fiennes relived the ordeal of watching the audience at a test screening answer questions about his film, hands shooting up, or not, like schoolchildren's. The film was "locked" but there was time for small fixes – some responding to notes from Peter Brook, whose naturalistic "King Lear" had been an influence. I'd been out twice to Belgrade during the shoot and seen how close the feel of the shoot was to the mood reel. The film mingled organically with its locations: in a market scene locals picked over the produce; a restaurant frequented by Serbian gangsters had a genuine "NO GUNS" sign on the door, and opposite was a fast-food kiosk that had been renamed Sausage Maximus. On the second trip I watched a rough-cut on Fiennes's Mac: urgent, fast-moving action and close-ups so tight that you could count the rays on his irises.

To see Fiennes directing was to observe his many facets: his fastidiousness about details; his art-school eye guiding the framing of every shot; a playfulness which sunlit the room when he was elated; his Oedipus ferocity with hands circling his shaven pate in despair at the chatter between takes (even Colin Vaines was once a target of his fury, "which was quite scary"). At dinner on a warm May night he looked shattered by the strain of acting as well as directing. It was nearly midnight, and we were sitting on an empty terrace overlooking the floodlit castle walls, with gamey smells drifting up from the zoo below. He had struggled all day, he said, to find the truth of the lines "to reach that naked place", while knowing he had to keep to the schedule. "I felt very alone."

Those close to Fiennes are used to seeing his eyes go suddenly gauzy in mid-conversation. "I know when not to ask what he's thinking," Joan Washington says. "It's not for you. He's gone into his room." Vaines calls it "Ralph going to Narnia – processing stuff. You know at some point he'll come back again." This is the prerogative of stardom – what Anthony Lane has called "that mysterious confluence of presence and reserve". But "Coriolanus" brought out something new: a nurturing, even parental side to Fiennes, which empowered others and infected them with his passion. John Logan had felt reassured that "this was not a vanity project for an actor". I left Belgrade with an equally strong conviction: Ralph Fiennes has reinvented himself, and "Coriolanus" is just the beginning. ■

Coriolanus is expected to open in the spring

A surfer takes off on a wave at Torö beach, on the Baltic coast of Sweden. Around 200 people surf here regularly – even in the middle of winter, when the water temperature can dip as low as 0°C.

THE CHILL OF IT ALL

Surfers don't just gather in California and Cornwall. A few tough men have made a habit of surfing at Torö, an island off the coast of Sweden. Among them is the photographer Daniel Månsson, who captures some frozen moments

In a Swedish summer the kindest thing you can say about the sea temperature is that it's cold; in winter it's freezing. Literally: in January and February, surfers at Torö, an only partly inhabited island an hour's drive south of Stockholm, have been known to walk out over a crust of Baltic sea-ice to get to the waves. Even when I visit, in October, a frigid wind is blowing; the sea is restless, the colour of mackerel and cold as a fish's skin. It looks anything but welcoming; but according to Daniel Månsson, who took the photographs on these pages, "Tomorrow, maybe Monday, it's going to be working. We'll be out there."

"We" means what he calls "the Stockholm caravan". This is a loose alliance of largely self-employed Swedes in their 20s and 30s, who leap into their bio-fuelled VW vans and head for Torö whenever word gets round that waves are on the way. Once there, they'll meet up with the hard core of local men (and it is mostly, though not exclusively, men) who pioneered cold-water surfing here almost 30 years ago. Looking at the beach – a steep incline of seaweedy granite cobbles backed by wind-tortured pines, with choppy waves that break uncomfortably close to the shore – you have to wonder why they bothered.

"We saw it in magazines," is the answer. Johan Cargelius, a tight-packed, single-minded dentist from Nynäshamn, has lived all of his 47 years in a clapboard house with its feet in the sea and its eyes on Torö. In 1983 a friend brought >

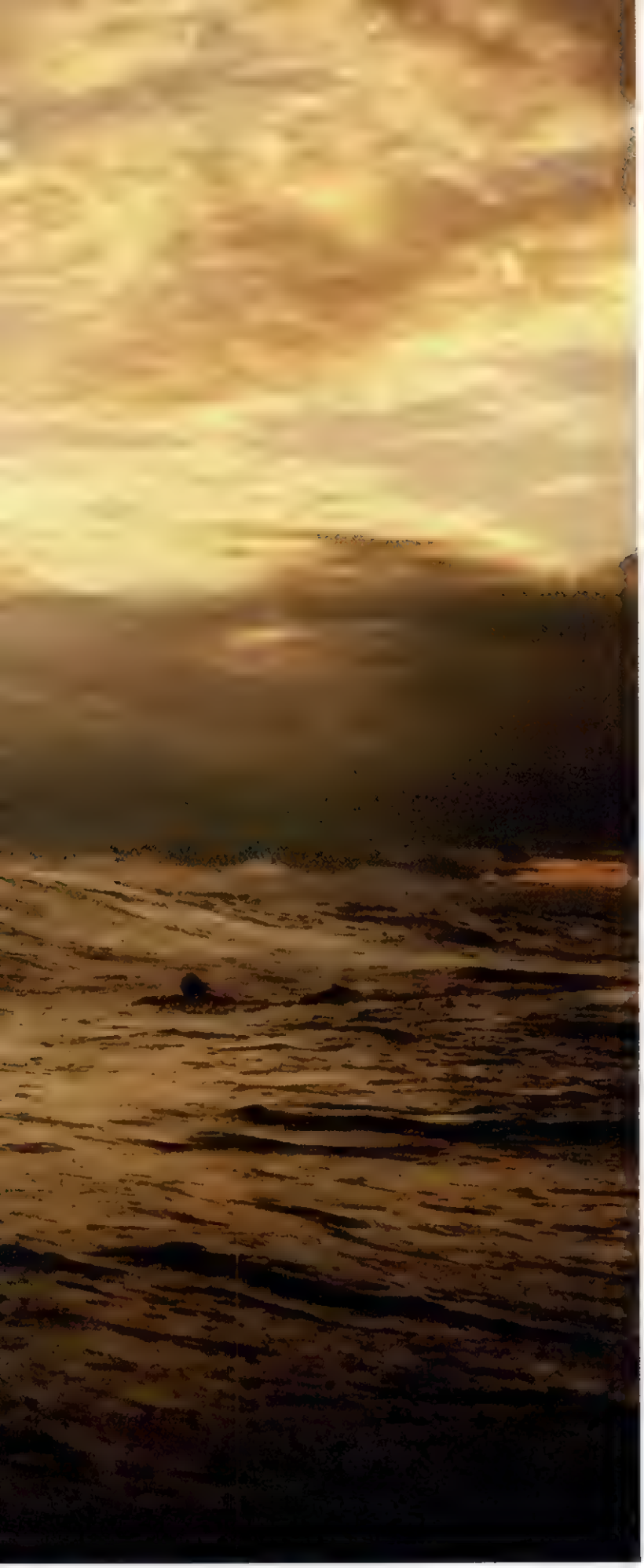
> back what Cargelius thought was a "beautiful, beautiful" surfboard from a trip to America; that, and a series of photographs of Hawaiian surfers he saw in a magazine, galvanised him. He borrowed the board, made his own leash (the strap that attaches board to ankle) out of a length of rubber, and headed for the water. The fact that the sea was a bare ten degrees warm – or cold – at the time didn't seem to be an issue: "It looked fun," he says. "I wanted to try those things."

Typically, the photo stories in surfing magazines do look fun: endless blonde Californian boys in flowery shorts, shooshing their boards through parabolas of sunlit blue ocean, dipping one balancing hand in the limpid, welcoming waters. The reality for early Swedish surfers was very different. These days, they can muffle themselves in high-tech layers of thick neoprene, but back then that kind of gear was yet to be invented, and Cargelius and his friends had to improvise. To stop their feet going numb, they wore thick socks under plimsolls; to keep their fingers from solidifying with cold, they pulled on woollen mittens and covered them with rubber washing-up gloves. The longest they could manage was a bare half an hour before the unthawed, unkind waves would force them out.

It's a tribute to the intense, addictive, improvisational joy of surfing that they continued, a joy Cargelius says he sees made concrete in Månsson's photographs. Unlike most surf photographers – who fetishise "the tube", that rare moment when an extremely skilled athlete cuts across the face of a double-height wave just ahead of its breaking lip – Månsson has spent five years capturing what goes on the other 99% of the time surfers are in the water. Whether beginner or expert, in cold seas or warm, anyone who's paddled out towards a tilting horizon, eyes blinded by sudsy spray, or felt half-exhilarated, half-terrified as a solid wall of wave, as black as a basilisk's eye, rears up in front of them, or sat, bobbing and meditative on their board, looking out to sea and waiting for one last set, will feel the salt sting of recognition when they look at his pictures. They may be of shivering thirty-something Vikings in wetsuits, but those Californian boys in their board shorts would understand. They're radical. ~ ISABEL LLOYD

Above The photographer's childhood friend Magnus, paddling out. Joel Sjögren, a 16-year-old regular, says: "This is just what Torö's like. When you look at it, you can feel the water beneath you, how cold and dark it is"

Right "I liked how this guy looked almost Hawaiian", says Daniel Månsson, "with his towel round him like a skirt." His fleece top is a post-surf necessity – the nearest hot shower is 20 minutes' drive away

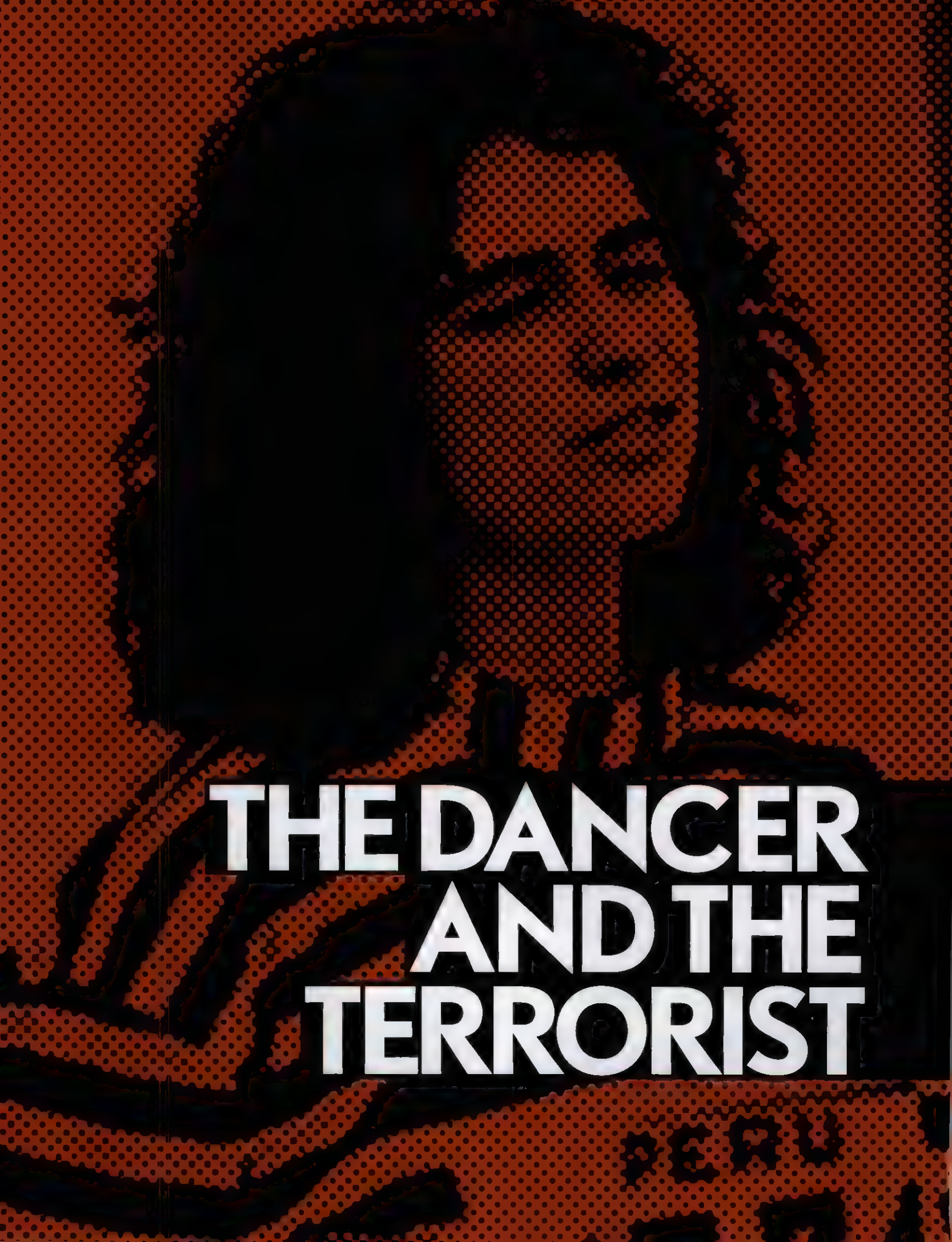


Johan Cargelius, a pioneer of surfing at Torö, wears a 7mm-thick wetsuit in winter. He claims not to suffer from the dual curses of the cold-water surfer: neither "ice-cream headache" — vivid, neuralgic pain at the front of the face — nor surfer's ear, where bone grows over the eardrum in an attempt to protect it from continual dousing. "But two of my friends have had their ears drilled," he says, nonchalantly

A good day. But Torö surfers need patience — for the beach to work, as they say, it needs several days of steady wind from the south to blow up a swell; ideally, the wind then switches to the north to keep the waves clean. This only happens at most 50 times a year

Above "To get shots like this", Månsson says, "I swim out with the surfers. I have some fins [flippers] to help me, which is fine when it's calm and golden, like this. But when it's big, I can get knocked under a lot, so I have to practise holding my breath. So far, I can last up to a minute"

Right and far right The beach is built of heavy cobbles, thrown aside as ice-age glaciers ground down to the sea. Torö regulars have to pick their way across them with cramped, cold feet — but they also use them to build small cairns for sitting on, the better to contemplate the waves


THE DANCER
AND THE
TERRORIST

"AMIGO?" THE INTERROGATOR, a stout policewoman in a tight black jersey, sits behind a scuffed counter.

"Si, amigo," I say, and sense her rolled eyes.

"Where are you from?"

"England." Then: "Do you get many visitors from England?"

"You're the first."

I hand over my passport. Another young policewoman stamps "B" on my right wrist and scribbles "38" with a green felt-tip. For days afterwards, I shall avoid washing my arm.

A squint-eyed man frisks me, then unlocks a door, ushering me through it into a compound with large buildings. A policewoman in an open wooden cabin guards the access.

I tell her whom I'm visiting.

"Amigo?" she flirts.

"Amigo."

"Pasa, bebé."

Another policewoman points out the entrance to Pavilion B, housing the Shining Path inmates. I'm signed in a third time, and am being escorted up a staircase when a figure darts forward. Trout-brown eyes, long dark hair parted in the middle, and a muslin scarf draped over her shoulders, embroidered with small flowers. Her face is thinner, more striking than in photographs. She wears loose black trousers and blue high-heeled shoes.

"Maritza?"

She nods, smiles.

Instinctively, I embrace her.

THE LAST TIME I saw Lima, it was recovering from the arrest of a Kantian philosopher who suffered from psoriasis. Abimael Guzmán, self-appointed Fourth Sword of Marx-Lenin-Mao, had initiated a ruthless guerrilla war which would last 20 years and cause 69,000 deaths. His capture – peacefully, in a room above a ballet studio – occurred in 1992 when his Shining Path organisation appeared on the brink of seizing the capital, and proved a transformative moment in Peruvian history.

Almost two decades on, Lima the horrible, as it was then known, has become Lima the stylish. Gleaming new cars everywhere. Casinos. The most praised restaurants in South America. And dominating the skyline on huge iron pillars, the blown-up face of the model Kate Moss, advertising an exhibition of society photographs by Mario Testino, who is Peruvian.

I've returned to Lima to interview another beautiful woman: the imprisoned dancer Maritza Garrido Lecca, in whose ballet studio Guzmán was arrested on the evening of September 12th 1992, as a result of which Maritza received a life sentence. In 1995, I published a novel about that night, "The Dancer Upstairs", which was made into a film by John Malkovich in 2001. And while I spoke to everyone I could – from the doctor who first cradled the new-born Guzmán, to Maritza's husband, lover, even her classical-ballet teacher – I never met Maritza. I would sometimes picture her in a cramped cell, like a candle burning down, her muscles degenerating. She was arrested at 27, the convent-educated only daughter of upper-middle-class parents who never suspected her involvement with the Shining Path. At what point would she be too old to dance again?

Then, this January, I received a copy of a book that Maritza had written in her cell. It was about dance, and on the title page was a personal inscription to me, hoping we could meet and have "a good conversation", one which might establish the truth.

And so, after a 17-year absence, I am in Lima again. >

When Peru's most wanted man was captured in 1992, a young ballerina went to jail too, for harbouring him at her studio. The story was turned into a novel and film, "The Dancer Upstairs". This year, the author of the novel, **Nicholas Shakespeare**, flew to Lima to meet the dancer at last – and to ask her whether she was guilty

The dancer inside
Maritza (circled) performing with her group in Chorrillos prison, 2003

> MARITZA'S LAWYER HAS arranged for me to visit her in the woman's prison in Chorrillos on Sunday May 16th. I concentrate on reacquainting myself with Lima. My enjoyment lasts until Saturday, when I open *Correo* and see a headline occupying a whole page: "RED ALERT FOR SHINING PATH".

It is 30 years since the Shining Path's foundation on May 17th 1980, when a group of masked strangers confiscated ballot boxes in the village of Chuschi. An anniversary plot has been uncovered to assassinate the defence minister, Rafael Rey, and a state of emergency has been declared in three provinces.

The idea that the Shining Path might not be extinguished ignites a gunpowder trail of unwelcome memories. I reflect on a recent e-mail from Guzmán's biographer, the Peruvian novelist Santiago Roncagliolo, about how he had done an interview in jail with a Shining Path "terrorist" who had followed me when I was researching Guzmán for a *Granta* profile. ("He was told you were a CIA man. But finally, he realised you were taking too many risks for a secret agent. He said 'CIA people are just the ones NOT asking for Abimael Guzmán on each door.' ") The discovery that I had been shadowed was disturbing, yet it made sense. When I was living in Lima in the 1980s, the Shining Path regarded journalists with unconcealed loathing. Guzmán refused all requests for interviews, and more than 40 reporters were killed while investigating his organisation. In 1987, I managed to question the godfather of the Shining Path, the ethnologist Dr Efraín Morote Best, about this.

THE DISCOVERY THAT I HAD BEEN SHADOWED WAS DISTURBING, YET IT MADE SENSE

He gave a chilling explanation: "Journalists take sides." One story haunted me: of a journalist who was said to have visited Shining Path prisoners in Lurigancho and was released – minus his tongue.

But this was decades ago. And Maritza's lawyer is taking me to the prison to see her.

"I'm not in danger?" I'd asked him, wrestling an unexpected apprehension.

"No, come to my house for breakfast and I'll drive you. You say 'Pavilion B' and 'I'm a friend.' You can stay till 5pm."

EARLY ON THE appointed Sunday I catch a taxi to the address that Dr Alfredo Crespo has given: 3126 Avenida Caminos Del Inca.

It's an overcast day, the streets empty. "IN SURCO WE LIVE WELL" in blue letters on white walls. A congregation assembling outside the Misericordia Church. The Divine Beauty Salon. Until we reach 3122, 3124. Then 3128, 3130, 3132...And the taxi driver shaking his head. "It doesn't exist."

I check my notebook. Definitely 3126. Plus, I have a vivid memory of Dr Crespo pointing it out, upside down, from a list of addresses in my notebook.

"Go round again..." But it crosses my mind: I'm entering a Borges story. This is like "The South", in which a traveller goes into a bar on the pampas and moments later is invited outside to a knife-fight...My fate is to continue on to the prison. Dr Crespo's house never was: through its non-existent door do I step to my destiny.

These are my morbid, resigned thoughts when the driver exclaims: "There it is!" And this time, as we drive past 3132, there is a low wall with a nut-brown metal door and, out of sequence, the number 3126.

I pay the fare, ring the bell, and am relieved to see Crespo's face.

MARITZA'S LAWYER, WHO is also Guzmán's lawyer, is a compact and restless man, polite and dapper, with still, dark, slanted eyes that give you the sense of being scrutinised upside down.

Earlier that week, in an empty restaurant off Plaza San Martín, Dr Crespo, who visits his clients in prison every Friday, described Guzmán's living conditions for me. "He has a bathtub next to his bed, his books above a table where he sits to eat, a TV which is turned on till 8pm – although he doesn't watch much TV, he likes reading, he would read this book you have [Antony Beevor's 'D-Day'] by Friday; and at 10pm he sleeps." Over a plate of ceviche, Crespo confirmed that 18 years in prison had done nothing to shift Guzmán's philosophy – "he still maintains his position as a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist" – and that "Dr Abimael" was busy writing a history of the Communist Party of Peru.

At the end of the meal, Crespo agreed, when he saw Guzmán the following Friday, to put a question to him that I have longed to ask.

Now, over Sunday breakfast, Crespo reveals that our lunch had taken place on the fifth anniversary of his release from prison. In January 1993, he was kidnapped in the street outside by a group of armed men and tried by a military tribunal. His crime: to have been a member of the Shining Path ("which I'm not") and to have defended Guzmán and Maritza. "I was sentenced to 12 years." He talks about his incarceration, the close spirit that it fostered among the inmates.

Once, when in prison in Puno, he spotted Maritza standing at a high window in the adjacent women's wing, and waved to her.

My coffee is almost cold when he discloses that he spoke

REUTERS

A caged guerrilla
Abimael Guzmán, leader of the Shining Path, in 1993

to Guzmán on Friday. "I asked Dr Abimael your question: Which is the play of Shakespeare he likes best? He told me that Shakespeare is his favourite author along with Cervantes. He has his complete works beside his bed for his night-time reading."

I observe that Shakespeare and Cervantes died on the same day.

"I didn't know that."

"What was his answer?" I have waited more than 25 years for this, my first direct communication with the godhead.

"'Richard III', he says. Followed by 'Macbeth'."

It rings true. Both plays are about betrayal, usurping, the hollowness of power. Although I was half-expecting "The Tempest". The last words Guzmán issued to his followers, apparently, before he disappeared underground exactly 30 years ago, were these: "No tongue; all eyes; be silent."

WE DRIVE TO the prison in Dr Crespo's ancient white Toyota. He has warned against wearing black and bringing keys or a telephone. But a notebook is permitted. As is my copy of *La República*. It contains another article about the Shining Path, with a photograph of Guzmán taken on the night after his capture, and a quote from Crespo about how the Peruvian Communist Party – the Shining Path's official wing – is preparing to participate in elections.

In the car, Crespo recites the names of 14 lawyers who have been killed by the government or have disappeared. They include Manuel Febres, the lawyer acting for Efraín Morote's son Osman. In July 1988, an army squad assassinated Febres as he drove along this same road. One point unites everyone: Guzmán and Maritza would have met the same fate had the police chief responsible for their capture handed them over to the government, as specifically instructed. Instead, General Antonio Ketin Vidal immediately contacted the press, later releasing that picture of Guzmán and Maritza to prove they >

The dancer's lawyer – and the terrorist's
Alfredo Crespo, campaigning for a retrial for Guzmán last April

> were still alive.

It's 10.20am when we park on the main highway a block from the prison. A pavement no wider than a plank leads us to a grey metal door. Dr Crespo raps on it.

Presently, a face peers out through an oblong aperture: male, dark moustache, squint eyes. "It's not lawyer's day."

"I'm bringing a friend."

A key grates in a lock. The door scrapes open. I enter.

Maritza's lawyer remains outside in the street and shakes my hand through the narrowing space.

IT'S A POWERFUL experience to meet a person you have lived with intimately in your head, whom you have had to construct from other people's memories. I know what Maritza's Argentine husband Saúl Mankevic thought of her; her poet-lover Rafael Davila; her director at the Ballet Naçional, where she danced Prokofiev as a Cinderella fairy. "She could have been the best ballerina in Peru," said Vera Stastny. But what I have never been able to work out – perhaps a reason for writing a novel and screenplay about her – is the process that led Maritza one day to exchange the ballet for the bullet.

This is how a character in "The Dancer Upstairs" describes the dancer I called Yolanda: "Who knows what was going on in her mind? She'd done nothing for other people or so she felt. And then she must have met someone who talked about the creativity of the Indians, and how the only way to help them recapture their identity was to offer them salvation through revolution. A very romantic view of Indian society... it could have happened to a lot of women like that – educated, pretty, good family, religious. You start with a humanitarian idea and before you know it, you're cutting throats."

That was my fictional interpretation at least. But I've learned to respect fiction. In my first novel featuring Abimael Guzmán, "The Vision of Elena Silves", written before his capture, I imagined that he suffered from psoriasis, smoked American cigarettes and harboured a passion for Frank Sinatra – all of which turned out to be true. So when Maritza discloses that her middle name is Yolanda, I'm not surprised as once I might have been. I'm all the more curious to discover how similar Maritza is to my creation and where she differs from it.

I follow her upstairs to a second-floor room. Seated around tables are other male visitors – friends, fathers, brothers, lovers – who talk to the prisoner they have come to see, share a bread roll, pour a glass of Inca Kola. The atmosphere is friendly, familial.

Here for the next six hours we talk.

To begin with, I give Maritza the floor. I'm expecting to be seduced and I am. Any expectation that 18 years in prison might have broken or embittered her is confounded by the attractive woman beside me, someone who is warm, feminine, naive, passionate, convinced, proud – and utterly familiar. She reminds me of my sister, another middle-class idealist, who lived in Peru with the Ashaninka Indians and who did charitable work in the jungle alongside Maritza's first cousin – but my sister refrained from taking that crucial further step.

"I've read your novel," she says once we've sat down.

"And?"

"It's your fiction," pointing. "There are things you got right, but it still reflects that you don't know us."

"That's why I'm here. To try and understand more."

"What do you want to understand?"

"How an innocent, devout ballerina who grew up wishing to be a missionary can make the leap into a revolutionary who shouts with a clenched fist for the armed war."

Her hands flutter up. "What do you say to a nun who watches all the people around her pick up weapons? What should she do?"

"Are you capable of killing someone?"

Maritza considers. "I've never been in that position."

She describes her position: "If I'd lived in Gandhi's time in India I would have behaved as Gandhi taught, but I lived in Peru in the 1980s. Sadly, the history of mankind shows that there's always a moment when you can't resolve social problems without violence."

Anyway, she no longer believes in God. "I am a Marxist."

"What does that mean?"

"A society without social classes, without states, without war."

"Was there ever such a society?"

"Before private property."

"How long ago was this?"

"A long time, maybe a million years. I've been told by social scientists, anthropologists, archaeologists that this is what it was like. Little by little we can get there again," and

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cites a book by Engels, "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State".

But she reads the doubt in my face. That I think it's absurd to row back to a primitive society, to a model that may not have existed.

The majority of us, I suggest, are not interested in politics, any more than we were in Bolivar's time; the Great Liberator, on a visit to Lima in 1823, believed most of the unarmed masses of Peru had "no commitment at all".

"If no one believes in popular war, how do you explain what happened in the countryside?" Her eyes blaze and glaze, and I have the impression I am talking to two people. There is the unreflective suddenness of her smile, the birdlike movements of her hands, like sparrows. Then the sparrow-hawk opposite; the face inert, the eyes still, as if a transparent guillotine has descended.

Abruptly she says: "Do you realise the equivalent of four twin towers of children die [of hunger] every day?"

And later: "We now buy potatoes from abroad. Potatoes! For Kentucky Fried Chicken!"

And later still: "I think socialism is better than capitalism. That's why I defend Russia in the time of Lenin, China in the time of Mao."

They feel like the shadows of a speech composed by another.

AS AN IMPRESSIONABLE teenager living in Buenos Aires, I met Jorge Luis Borges, who told me: "Five minutes of anyone's life is worth more than all of Shakespeare." At the same age, Maritza must have met someone who was able to persuade her that the opposite was true – who made her life subservient to a text, and so the lives of thousands of others. Guzmán's 1985 mantra was "inducing genocide", replaced in 1988 by "the triumph of the revolution will cost a million deaths".

Still, today, Maritza is unable to acknowledge where her ideals have led – which is to the deaths of 69,000 mostly innocent people. She has paid a big price for her idealism, passing her youth and adulthood in captivity, but prison has also enabled her to remain calcified, even to bloom. Astonishingly, I realise, the realities of social change in Peru, and indeed the world, have not interfered with the flame; her candle, instead of burning down, has remained unnaturally bright.

If that is so, why has she agreed to see me? I'm a novelist, a natural enemy of inflexible doctrines. I deal in ambiguity, contradiction, doubt.

We are talking – about the IRA, or maybe it's an ice festival near Cuzco we both attended, or her admiration for the Portuguese novelist José Saramago, or her love of Frank Sinatra, modern dance ("You know what is most difficult to dance? Reggaetón", and she moves her hips) when Maritza leans forward, holds me with her eyes. "Do you believe me? Do you believe I am telling the truth?" My answer seems important.

I say, "I believe almost everything you have told me except that you didn't know he was upstairs."

THE SHINING PATH made Peru ungovernable. There were assassinations and the army fought violence with violence. On the night of June 18th 1986, soldiers acting on the orders of President García stormed three prisons and massacred more than 200 Shining Path inmates. A paramilitary army squad calling itself Commando Rodrigo Franco attacked journalists and lawyers who showed sympathy for Guzman's ideals. By 1986, terror had sunk its fangs into the capital. Not a day passed without a car exploding, until on July 16th there was the largest explosion of all, a 1,700lb bomb which rent apart the Miraflores district of Lima, killing another 23 people and reducing the hotel Maria Angola, where I had been staying but three days earlier, to rubble. A Shining Path spokesman declared, "We are on the point of taking power."

Then on the evening of September 12th, the police general, Antonio Ketin Vidal, announced to the press that Abimael Guzmán had been captured above a ballet studio in the middle-class suburb of Los Sauces.

Vidal had been surveying No. 459 following a tip-off from the Shining Path's third-in-command. This was Luis Alberto Arana Franco ("Comrade Manuel"), who had been captured by Vidal's men in July. He was in charge of the organisation's finances – and a professor at the César Vallejo academy. In exchange for a new identity abroad, he revealed Maritza's address.

Every day for the next two months, Vidal sent agents disguised as courting couples up and down the street. He planted gardeners on the corners to water the African tulips – it was now the best-kept neighbourhood in Lima. In the rubbish he found empty packets of Kenacort-E cream, for psoriasis, as well as Winston cigarette stubs. And Maritza was buying

HER EYES BLAZE AND GLAZE, AND I HAVE THE IMPRESSION I AM TALKING TO TWO PEOPLE

food for several more people than the two who occupied the house. She also bought clothes for an outsized man, yet her new boyfriend, an architect, was thin. It suggested someone else was living on the second floor where the curtains never parted. But who?

At 8pm, a young woman accompanied by a much older man stepped from an orange VW Beetle and entered the studio: they were Maritza's best friend, the choreographer Patricia Awapara, and Maritza's uncle, also Patricia's lover, Celso Garrido Lecca, a distinguished composer. For the next half hour, the three discussed a dance based on Euripides's "Antigone" which Maritza was going to perform. >

> Then, as they said goodbye, Vidal issued the order.

Maritza says: "I open the door to let them leave and it's kicked open by plain-clothes men who burst in and push my head down on the dance floor."

Vidal's men didn't know if they would find men with guns, or an escape tunnel. Instead, they found Guzmán seated in a room on the second floor, watching the boxing on Channel 13.

Maritza confirms: "They didn't know who was inside. They were surprised. I remember hearing their shouts from upstairs, 'Vengo, vengo! El Cacheton!' [Fat-face – the police nickname for Guzmán.] They didn't know."

Any more than she did?

Maritza's problem – the reason she is inside – is that she held the keys to the house where Guzmán was captured.

She sighs: "I rented a house for two months, for which I have been sentenced to 25 years in prison. I sublet the second-floor flat to Doña Elena [Yparraguirre, Guzmán's companion and second-in-command]. I was giving lessons downstairs to girls aged 7 to 11 – 45 minutes with cassette music, a combination of contemporary and modern. I was also giving lessons outside to other students. I was away a lot."

I invite her to draw a plan of the house in my notebook. What surprises me is the common entrance – leading to a staircase that ascends to a second-floor landing, and then to a third floor where Maritza and her architect boyfriend, Carlos Inchaustegui, slept. Yparraguirre had to walk through the studio and up those stairs to reach the flat she shared with Guzmán.

"I FIND IT INCREDIBLE THAT YOU CAN BE INNOCENT, THAT YOU DIDN'T SEE HIM"

"So when", I ask Maritza, "did you first see Abimael Guzmán?"

But her gaze is direct, unflinching, and I feel a stab of disappointment that I'm not the one who can crack her. "When we were presented the following night at DINCOTE [the police headquarters]. I was between him and Celso."

Celso, Patricia and Maritza had spent the night with hoods over their heads. Celso told me that when the hoods came off he saw that he was standing next to the most wanted man in the southern hemisphere. The two of them were surrounded by women ferociously punching the air, screaming "Viva Abimael!"

Celso looked around for his niece, the soft-spoken, lovely Maritza who never mouthed a bad word in her life, who never had an enemy. He saw her face among the screaming women, contorted with rage and defiance. "Viva Abimael!"

Celso told me: "It was pure Kafka."

Maritza points at the famous image reproduced in my copy of *La República*: Guzmán in black loose clothes, a white placard hanging from his neck – the first picture seen of him since 1980. "I am standing there – they've cut out my photo in the last two years." Her finger traces her absent image, down a column in which the interior minister reassures his colleague in defence that there's no possibility the Shining Path will assassinate him; a column that now occupies the place where Maritza had punched the air.

"Why did you shout," I ask Maritza, "if you were innocent?"

"I thought we were going to die."

Because this is the rub. Maritza's passion and training is dance: a medium in which the body expresses itself, but in silence. And if she had remained silent like her uncle Celso, like her best friend Patricia..."If she hadn't lifted her hand," says an old professor I bump into as I'm leaving Chorrillos, another visitor, who sometimes dances the tango with Maritza, "she might be free like the others." But in this moment on the evening of September 13th 1992, Maritza raises her fist and screams her support for Abimael Guzmán, his genocidal revolution.

"I didn't shout anything I didn't believe," she says. "I thought it was going to be my last shout. So I thought I'd tell the world what I thought."

"Do you regret that?"

"Yes. Because it's completed the image of me in the public mind."

But how inaccurate is that image? I look again at her sketch of the ballet studio. Surely she would have overheard Guzmán's conversations on the second floor. Surely she would have known there was a man up there?

Something stirs in her eyes. "What do you think?"

"I find it incredible that you can be innocent, that you didn't see him."

"I leave that to you."

What she leaves me is baffled. The Yolanda of my novel admits to protecting her leader. And yet here is Maritza, maintaining the fiction that she never knew Abimael Guzmán, never knew he was there, only met him after the police stormed her studio. Why? What's in it for her?

I ask myself: is she protecting someone? Is she in danger? Is her lawyer advising her to say this? Or could it be – from the moment she told her first Peter-like lie – she created a position she had to maintain? Could it be that her denial, aside from preserving a proud face, gave her a role?

MARITZA WAS TAKEN to the air-force prison in Arequipa. Four women, separate cells, not allowed to speak. "If we spoke, they turned the light off – total darkness." Her trial was more or less as in the novel. "I was led into a room. In the centre was a chair set in concrete. My arms were chained to it." She mimics her constraint. "I am facing a wall of glass in which I can see myself. I hear a male voice and the sound of a typewriter. Next to me stands a man with a gun, on the other

"She could have been the best ballerina in Peru"
Maritza Garrido Lecca, who has been in prison since 1992

side an air-force lawyer who is supposed to defend me. From 10pm to 5am I am interrogated."

"What did you feel?"

"Furious. Impotent. I am accused of having the potential to be a leader in future. I say: 'Then why aren't you incarcerating all the poor people who have the potential to be leaders?'

"On October 15th, I am brought back to the room. This time my lawyer is beside me. I am sentenced to life imprisonment [commuted later to 25 years]."

She is sent to Puno, an old prison. "It's 4,000 metres [up] and cold, cold, cold – a spectacular cold. My skin cracks open. At night the water freezes in the yard and in the morning we break the ice so we can wash. In the first year, I received one visit – from my brother." Half an hour, no touching, facing each other through bars. "I was allowed no pencil, no paper, no book, no newspapers, nothing. Only the clothes I brought with me in a small suitcase."

"Is it true that you sent a message to your mother: 'Tell her I am dead. I live only for the revolution'?"

"No! I could never say such a thing. What is true is that I didn't see my parents for seven and a half years. My father is 84 and has had four by-pass operations. Because of the altitude he couldn't come to Puno. He flew with my mother to see me when I was transferred to Arequipa in 2000. We were given two hours for a special visit and allowed to embrace for the first time. I cried a lot. They cried a lot."

"Your father, could he understand?"

"No, he is like you. He believes the world must change, but not with violence."

A characteristic of revolutionaries is their childlessness. Maritza is 45. Had she wanted children?

"For a ballerina, it's hard to have children. You have to choose the moment carefully. In my head, I hoped to have them when I was 30. But that is life. I don't want a child to be born in here."

What about relationships? Rafael Davila, currently teaching in Boston, told me: "She was a born seductress."

Maritza rocks back, laughing. "I can't live without love."

Since 1998 her boyfriend has been a 57-year-old Shining Path prisoner. They met in Puno. "The guards would turn a blind eye if you wanted to have intimate moments." Now, she is permitted to visit him every four months for two hours. But she doesn't want to marry, as Abimael Guzmán and Elena Yparraguirre have arranged to do. "I've been married once. Never again."

And those reports that she slept with Guzmán?

"Please!" groaning. "That was a horrible lie to denigrate us as women, that we all slept with him."

"My hero never believed that."

"Happily." Then: "I have respect for my body. I give it to who I wish."

In prison, Maritza must have missed countless things. Was there anything it surprised her to miss?

"The sea," without a beat. After she was moved to Chorrillos in 2001, Maritza made a clay sculpture of a girl on a rock, head tilted back, balancing on one thin leg. "I had the idea she was smelling the sea air."

Maritza called the sculpture "Libertad de Danzar". It broke after a month, but its photograph is in a book she had sent me, written in Chorrillos. Also titled "Libertad de Danzar", it is a dance manual for those who find themselves in confined circumstances.

She makes a sketch in my notebook: a cell in Puno two metres by two and a half – her home and stage for seven years. Woken at 6am, after melting the ice she was allowed to exercise for an hour.

"I created that book in my head. I thought: How can I conserve my instrument, my body, to be a dancer in future? I could do développés, pliés, yes" – at the words, her body animates itself – "but I couldn't leap." She stands and her arm reaches up to touch invisible bars.

Maritza's identity as a ballerina has remained inviolate, to a degree that I wonder if it wasn't ballet which provided the discipline to maintain her political stance. Since coming to Chorrillos she has formed a group called Huellas (footprints), and in 2003 she choreographed a ten-minute dance inspired by the government's 1986 massacre of 200 Shining Path prisoners. She gives me a DVD: "It's not Margot Fonteyn."

"Which dancer has influenced you most?"

She hesitates. "The Cuban National Ballet with Alicia Alonso. I saw her in Lima 25 year ago. I admired her vision."

"What's the first thing you will do on gaining your freedom?"

"My father says: 'I'm going to take you to the best restau- >

An unlikely saviour
Maritza and Guzmán are alive today because of this former police general, Antonio Vidal

> rant and feed you steak and give you everything you haven't been able to eat. Red wine, pisco, *suspiro de limeña*.' My mother says: 'I'm going to take you for a walk along the beach.' I told my mother: 'You know me better.' But first I'd like to have a hot shower. I haven't had one in 18 years."

Upon her release in seven years, Maritza plans to create her own dance and theatre company, helping young people.

"For how much longer will you be able to dance?"

"Until my body allows me. I have problems with my joints."

"What about theatre?"

"Until I die."

"Are you a good actress?"

She looks at me and we both know what the answer is. In the pool of her eyes, a tail has tucked back behind a rock. "No. But I can learn."

Shortly before 5pm, the visitors stand up to leave. We embrace and I invite Maritza to come and stay when she gets out. I reveal that I'm hoping to speak with the policeman who arrested her. Has she any message?

"Tell him I have respect for him. Tell him I hope he realises I'm innocent."

MY EMOTIONS OVER the next 24 hours are rawer than the ceviche I eat that night, in a restaurant overlooking the sea. I find myself ordering a steak, savouring each mouthful as though after a long interval. I order a pisco sour, then red wine. As I drink, I hear her words: "That's why I've got to get out." I finish with the *suspiro de limeña*, a sickly flan – "I like the sweet, the sweetest of the sweet," she had said. And still I can't puzzle out why she agreed to see me. Unless she wanted to meet a person who had presented her with a romantic version of herself, and to test it.

The man likeliest to have an answer is the same man largely responsible for Lima's new-found prosperity and stability: Antonio Ketin Vidal. Maritza, Guzmán and Yparraguirre are alive today because of this former police general, who disobeyed orders to hand them over to President Fujimori's security adviser, Vladimiro Montesinos.

When I meet Vidal again, on the evening of the Shining Path's 30th anniversary, I tell him of my admiration for his action: the conviction, widely shared, that it was a transformative moment in his country's history. His courage, his determination to uphold the law, didn't merely save Maritza, it saved Peru from an ever-deepening abyss of violence.

Modest as he is, Vidal can't help nodding. "It was a sublime moment." He adds: "Dr Guzmán may be a criminal, but he has to be treated as a human being. He still has his rights."

Vidal sits hunched, arms forward, hands clasped between knees, speaking in a low, slow husky voice, his features creased into a painful expression. He is taken aback to hear there is a film in which he is played, triumphantly, by Javier Bardem ("I didn't know").

The news from the countryside doesn't surprise him. "It's an incendiary situation. These are residuary groups, formed by people who have been released from prison, but we don't really know. Our intelligence is not very good." He sees the possibility of other subversive movements being born. "Nothing has improved. There's still poverty, injustice, lack of education, lack of health, food. In the midst of impotence, people turn to violence."

We talk about Maritza, her ambitions for a fairer society. Vidal reflects: "Maritza and I are on the same path, but our means of getting there are different. The state can't use the same methods as terrorists. You must use other methods."

He enquires how she is. It's impossible for him to visit her in Chorrillos. All eyes are on him wherever he goes.

I convey her respect for him, plus her awareness that he saved her life.

He nods. "I did save her life, because if I had handed her over" – he makes a throat-cutting gesture. "Montesinos wanted it. Fujimori too." By exquisite irony, both men are now in prison for human-rights abuses; Montesinos arrested by the slight figure who sits opposite, nursing a Coke, without ice.

"What was your impression of Maritza?"

"My impression is that she was from a good home, white, educated, attractive, lovely clear eyes – in criollo slang, a *pituca*. But her fight for the poor was a contradiction. It resulted in her becoming one of the strongest characters in the movement."

I give him Maritza's last message. Even now, part of me wants to believe she's innocent.

"Is it possible she never knew Guzmán was up there?"

He shakes his head emphatically. "When I spoke to Guzmán in my office, I asked for Maritza to be brought in, to observe her reaction. She entered the room and emotionally she was not able to control herself. She ran forward and embraced him, 'Presidente'."

I look at Vidal, waiting for him to go on. In my novel, I wrote: "Here was a man who had fought not against one system but two. What he represented was better than either."

"She was a puppet," he says. "It's a human tragedy." ■

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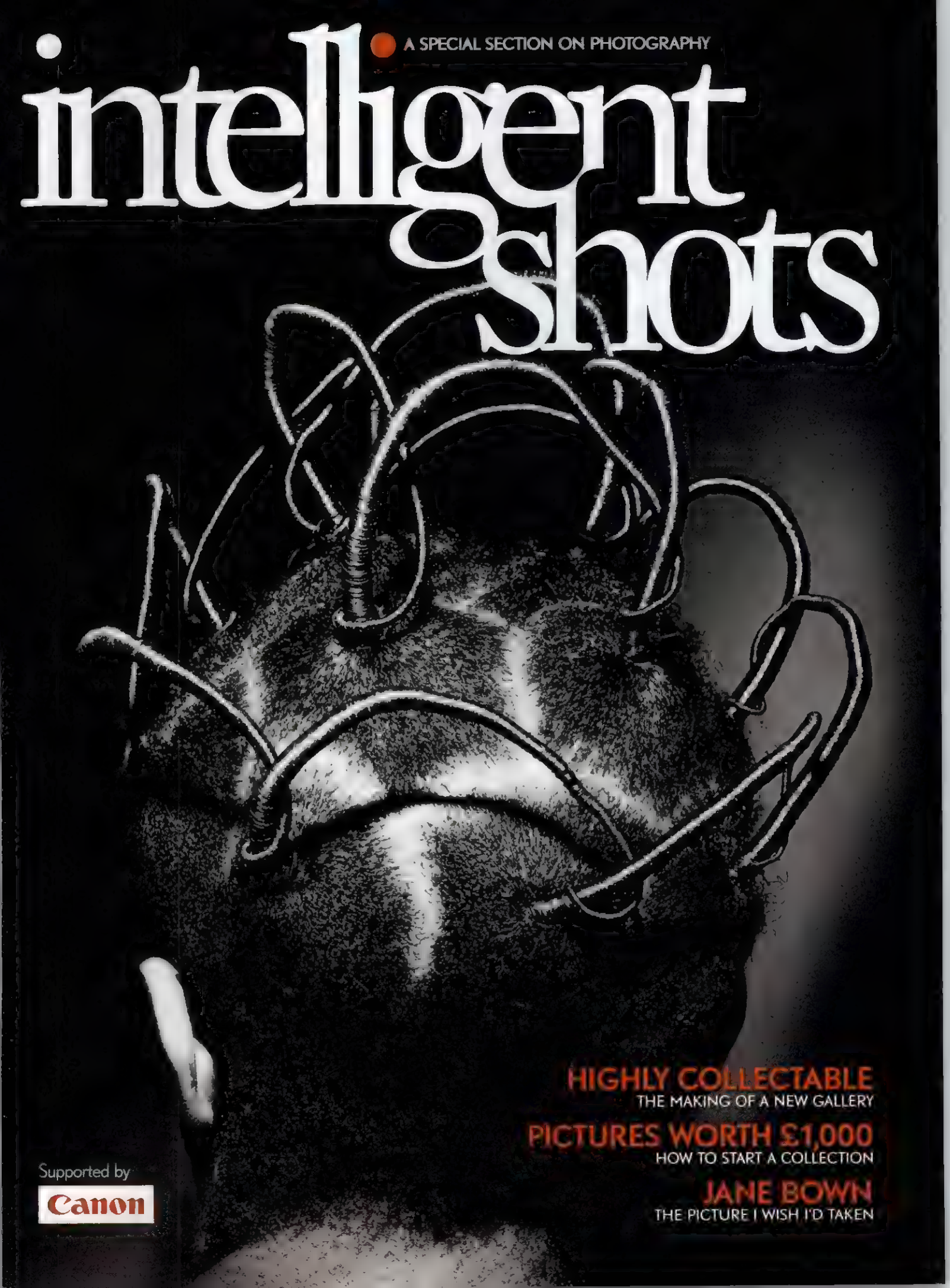

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THE PICTURE I WISH I'D TAKEN

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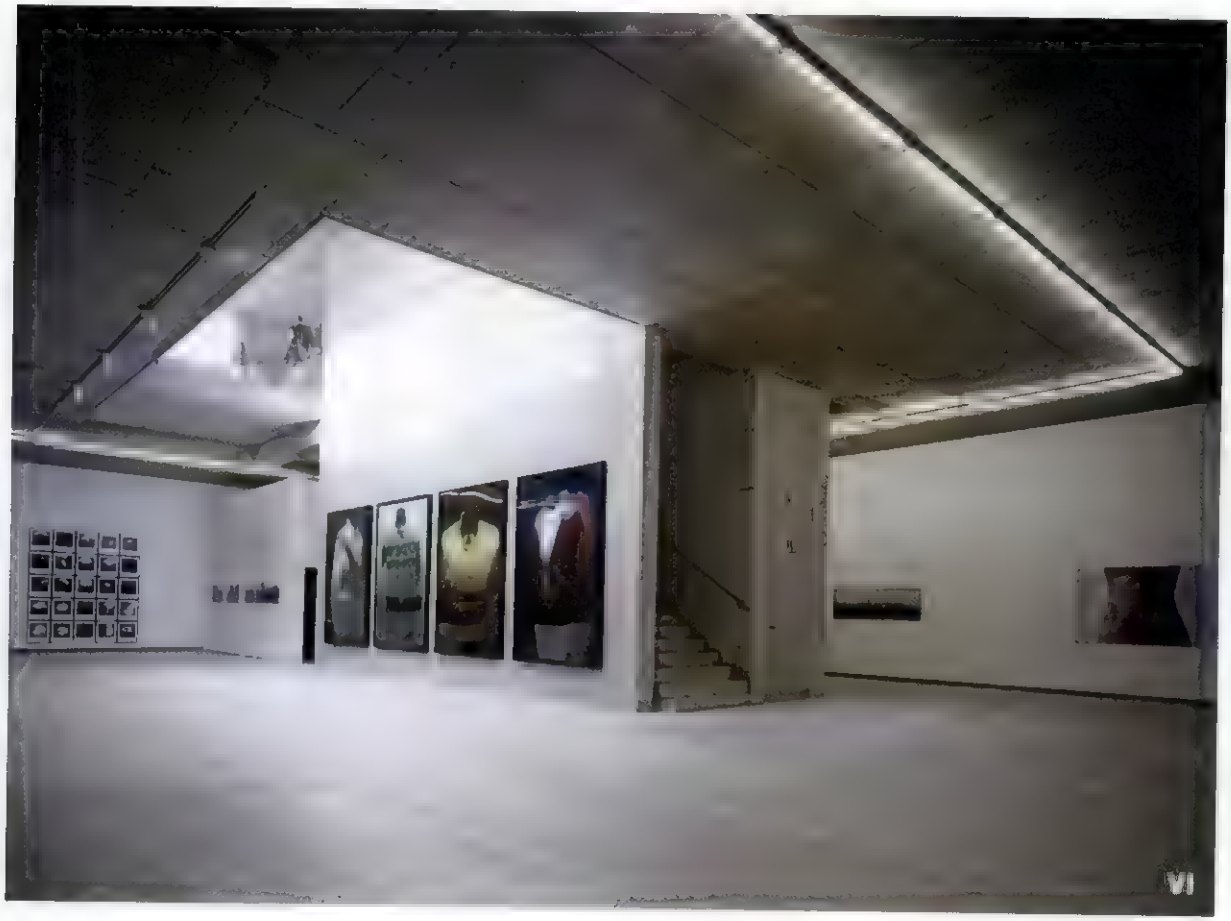
Welcome to *Intelligent Shots*, the first supplement from *Intelligent Life*. With our photo essay, we have memorable pictures in every issue; this special section, supported by Canon, lets us expand on this enthusiasm. We go to Germany to see how one collector built a beautiful gallery *(below)* – beneath the streets where he grew up. We send our art director out with £1,000 to show how to start a collection of your own. We pick the most promising photography shows of 2011, and we ask a great photographer a simple question: which picture do you wish you had taken? ~TIM DE LISLE, EDITOR



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THIS YEAR: PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWS 2011

Paul Graham: the camera as social commentator

Paul Graham emerged as a young photographer in Britain at the end of the 1970s and immediately challenged the traditional language of black-and-white, working in colour, which, far from glamorising contemporary life, revealed its tawdriness, and was undeniably more accurate. His first book, "A1: The Great North Road", was steeped in the American photographers he admired: William Eggleston, Robert Frank, Lewis Baltz and Stephen Shore. His highway was a two-lane trunk road that made its way north through England, punctuated by petrol stations, roadside cafés and glimpses of countryside, little of it bucolic *(above, "Ferrybridge Powerstation, West Yorkshire", 1982)*. He used photography not so much to describe as to analyse his surroundings. His next project, "Beyond Caring", showed what the inside of a British dole office felt like in the early years of Thatcherism, when unemployment passed 3m and there was a gloom in the air very like today's. "Troubled Land" was his reflection on the war in Northern Ireland, where the most innocent features in the landscape – a tree with a Union Jack caught in it – showed the insidious reach of the Troubles. Graham then travelled to Europe, Japan and America, where he now lives and works, as critic in photography at Yale School of Art. In each country he has made groups of works that react to the prevailing culture in different ways – clubbing in Europe, tradition and industrialisation in Japan, poverty and inequality in America – all the time keeping faith with his belief that a photograph could be instilled with intellectual as well as visual power. This show is a full retrospective, with a first-class catalogue charting the development of one of our leading contemporary artists. – LIZ JOBEY

Paul Graham *Whitechapel Gallery, London, April 20th to June 19th*

THIS YEAR: PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWS 2011

Kertesz: a one-man century

Like Cartier-Bresson, who so admired him, Andre Kertesz lived for almost a century. From his early photo "sketches" in rural Hungary, to modernist experiments in Paris, to landscapes taken from his apartment overlooking Washington Square in New York, to the Polaroids that occupied the last years of his life, Kertesz explored the boundaries of photography, taking in photojournalism and portraiture along the way. His pictures are poetic, conscious of the vulnerability of nature in the face of technology; shown here is "Satiric dancer", 1926 *(right)*. This is the first full retrospective shown in Europe, with a 360-page catalogue, in English. ~ LJ

Andre Kertesz *Jeu de Paume, Paris, to February 6th. Fotomuseum Winterthur near Zurich, February 26th to May 15th*

AT A GLANCE

Pictures by Women: A History of Modern Photography (Museum of Modern Art, New York, to March 21st). Sad but true: women have been in the minority as the standard history has been compiled. This show mixes early moderns such as Berenice Abbott, Florence Henri and Gertrude Käsebier (*below, "The Manger", 1899*) and their successors Cindy Sherman and Nan Goldin.

Wang Qingsong (International Centre of Photography, New York, January 21st to May 8th). Once a painter, Wang Qingsong makes huge staged scenarios dealing with China's consumer culture. Plus **Take Me to the Water**, river baptism photographs 1880-1930, many sent as postcards, by believers and tourists alike.

The New Snapshot (Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, December 11th to February 6th 2011). Six Japanese photographers explore the meanings of the snapshot. With a complementary show from the museum's collection.

Hans-Peter Feldmann: "An Art Exhibition" (Reina Sofia, Madrid, to February 28th). Since the 1960s, Feldmann has worked with the wallpaper of our lives – images from newspapers, magazines, advertisements, catalogues, packaging. He pastes them into albums, or groups them into genres – unmade beds, women's knees – and publishes them as small books. Banal but familiar, they emphasise the link between individual and collective experience.

Joan Fontcuberta: Landscapes Without Memory (Foam, Amsterdam, to February 27th). By feeding painted landscapes – from Van Gogh, Cézanne, Turner et al – into a software system that turns two dimensions into three, Fontcuberta (b. 1955 in Barcelona) creates what he calls "post-landscapes" that hover somewhere between the known and the unknown.

William Eggleston: Democratic Camera – Photographs and Video, 1961–2008 (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, to January 16th). Surprising as it might seem, Eggleston, the master of colour photography, was an early fan of Cartier-Bresson. This comprehensive show traces his work over five decades, from early b/w to the rich dye-transfer prints of his best-known images, which, 35 years ago, ushered colour photography into museums of contemporary art.

Alexander Rodchenko (Fotomuseum Winterthur, May 27th to August 21st). This Russian constructivist (1891–1956) turned to photography in the 1920s, feeling it was the art form of the future. Expect vertiginous perspectives, bold close-ups, montages and crowd scenes.

Felice Beato: A Photographer on the Eastern Road (Getty Centre, Los Angeles, December 7th to April 3rd 2011). Beato (1832–1909) travelled to India, China, Japan, Korea and Burma in the first decades of photography. His battlefield scenes in China were the first to show dead bodies. Setting up a studio in Yokohama in 1863, he made portraits, landscapes and costume studies, and introduced hand colouring. This is the first major survey of his work.

Exposed: Voyeurism, Surveillance and the Camera (San Francisco MoMA, to April 17th). The camera's role as hidden observer, stalker and spy. Also, **Cartier-Bresson: The Modern Century** (to January 30th), a re-examination with particular reference to his work for magazines.

Gerhard Richter: Panorama (Tate Modern, London, October 6th to Jan 8th 2012). Potentially the exhibition of the year. Not strictly photographic, but a chance to see the work of one of the great living artists, and one for whom photographs have been a fundamental resource.

The Goetz collection (Haus der Kunst, Munich). From February 2011, the Haus will show films and media art from the Ingvild Goetz collection in its former air-raid shelter. The first group concentrates on war, dictatorship, torture and persecution with Willie Doherty, Harun Farocki, Mona Hatoum, Anri Sala, Rosemarie Trockel and others. ~ LJ

More than 150 years after the camera caught on, there are still very few galleries devoted to photography. But in a quiet suburb on the Danube, one German-American collector has returned to the streets where he grew up to carve out a spectacular exhibition space. Liz Jobey goes to Neu-Ulm to get the measure of the Walther Collection

COOL, CALM

An unlikely picture palace: the White Box, where visitors enter the Walther Collection; the Green House is to the left, the Black House to the right

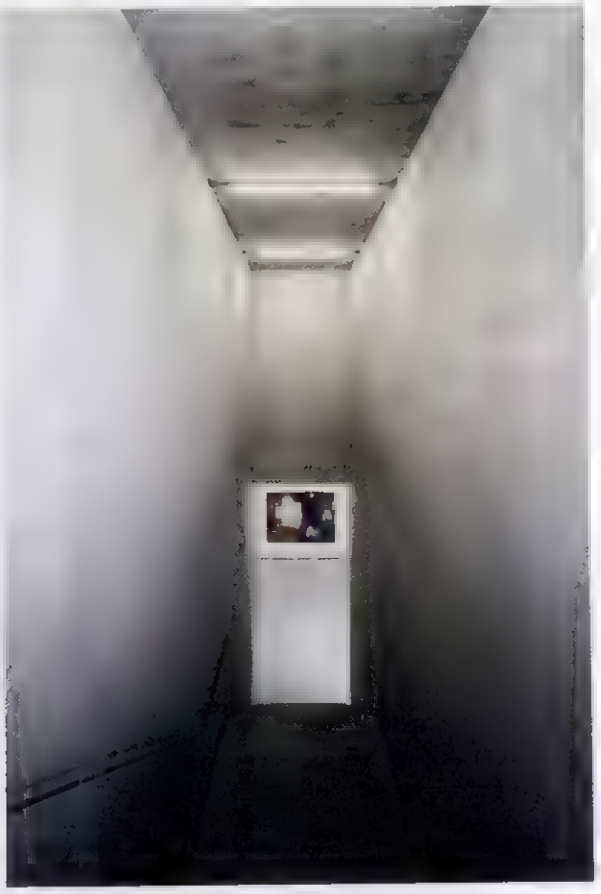
& COLLECTED

PHOTOGRAPHS STEFFEN SCHRAGLE

EVEN THE PEOPLE who live in Ulm, the old Bavarian city with the tallest church spire in the world, think it surprising that Neu-Ulm, its twin across the Danube, should be the site of a new international art museum. "Neu-Ulm und kultur?" queried the local listings magazine with mock-incredulity. Usually, it's Legoland, a dozen miles away, which is cited as Neu-Ulm's nearest cultural attraction. But there is also a sense of pleasure that one of its more successful sons, who left for America 30 years ago, should have decided to settle his art collection back home, in the house he grew up in.

Well, almost. In fact he decided to knock down the old house and build a modern white cube in its place, but despite its cool blankness, the cube is of the same modest proportions as the red-roofed family houses that surround it and, like them, sits in its own garden plot.

This is in Burlafingen, one of the outlying districts of Neu-Ulm. A small farming village before the second world war, it has grown since, but is still little more than a residential pod ten minutes' drive from the centre, with flat green fields on every side. Artur Walther grew up in Burlafingen. He was born in Ulm in 1948, when the war had destroyed four-fifths of Neu-Ulm, including all the bridges across the Danube, which meant that the infrastructure of the city had to be rebuilt in the 1960s and 1970s. There was an American army base there from 1951 to 1991 – by which time Walther had become a successful investment banker in New York. He retired from Goldman Sachs in 1994, and one of the things he planned to do was follow his interest in photography.



He took a course at the International Centre of Photography (ICP) in New York and gradually, then more systematically, began to collect. In 1997 he met Bernd and Hilla Becher, the German couple who had worked together since the late 1950s building up a unique archive of photographic studies of industrial structures – blast furnaces, mine-head winding gear, grain silos, water towers, gasometers – which were disappearing from the landscape of Europe and the United States. The Bechers are renowned for the clarity and precision of their photographs, which they often present as series, or "typologies", in comparative grids. It's not every admirer of the Bechers who can say of them, "we photographed and printed together", but this seems to be what happened to Walther. When he talks about them, it sounds as if it was their dedication and methods that he admired, as much as the actual images. "What I liked about the Bechers is that they were unbelievably focused, determined, systematic in what they were doing, and they used that globally," he said. "It was their encyclopedic approach, their interest in form, object and function, that attracted me and started my collecting."

What began with the Bechers soon extended to other German photographers for whom classification was an important working model: portraits by August Sander (1876-1964), whose ambition had been to make a portrait map of German society, ordered by class and by occupation, and plant studies by Karl Blossfeldt (1865-1932), a sculptor and a teacher, who spent 30 years photographing plant specimens with a home-made magnifying camera, so that his students could observe their structural details. "In all of these works", Walther says, "the intention is typological classification and the viewpoint is objectifying. It does not allow any experimental artistic aesthetic...[it] is systematic,

Going underground
ABOVE The main hall, with portraits by Samuel Fosso from "African Spirits"
LEFT Photograph by Zwelethu Mthethwa from the series "Interior"

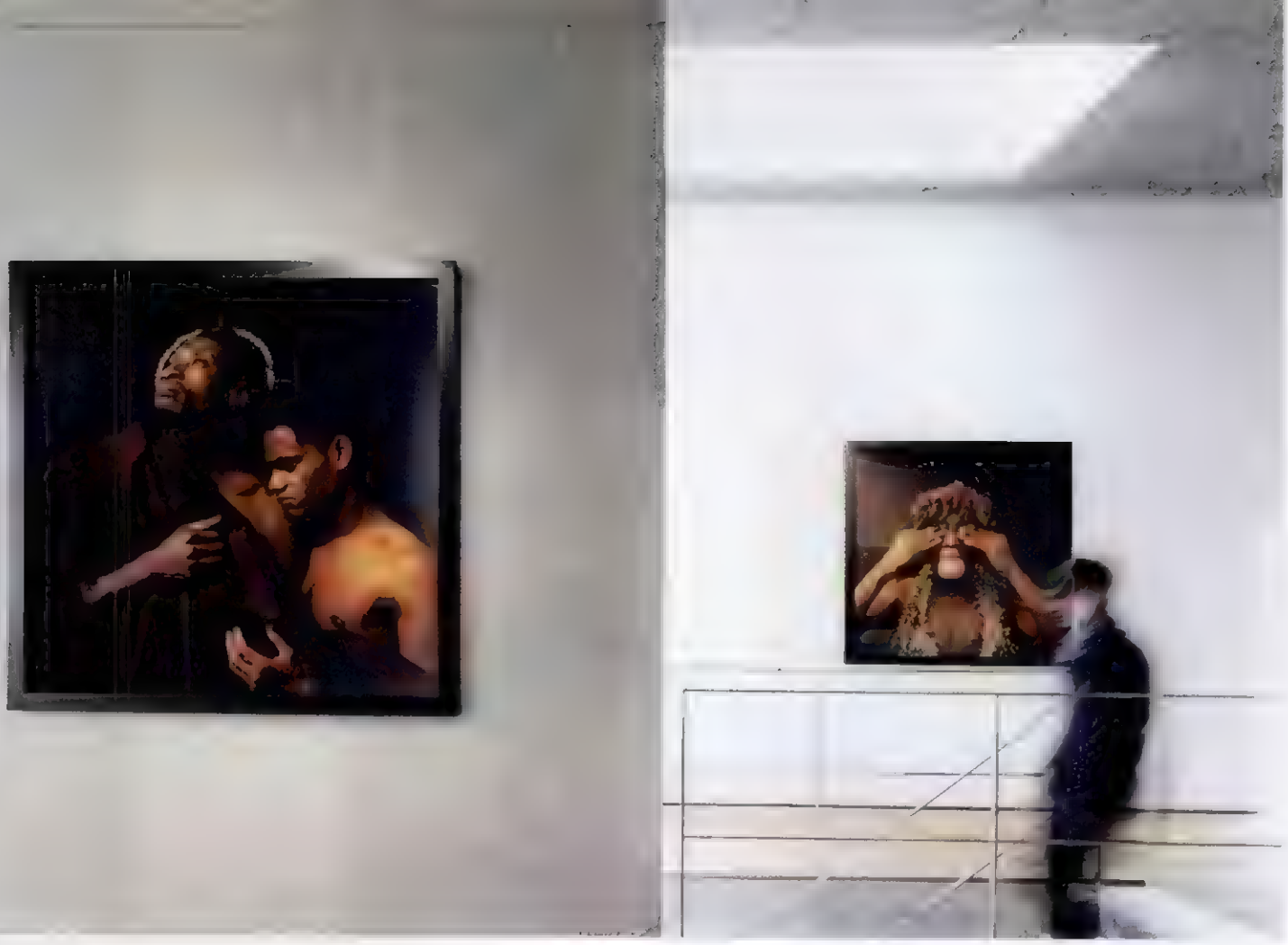
serial, objective, classified, structured. And I loved it."

From here his collecting went in two directions: to Africa where, inspired by the portraits of the Mali photographer Seydou Keita, taken in the 1940s and 1950s but rediscovered and published in the early 1990s, he began to investigate the work of local contemporary photographers; and to Asia where, after making frequent trips to China, he began to recognise artists whose work he wanted to buy. With his expanding European and American holdings, his collection took on a highly distinctive character.

Apart from his mother, who still lived in Burlafingen, Walther had little reason to go back to Germany. He had become an American citizen, his children lived in America, and he was on the boards of several New York institutions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art – and ICP. As chairman of the exhibitions committee, he had launched the ICP Triennial of Photography and Video in 2003. He had, he said, turned his apartment into a clean white space where he could hang his collection on the walls.

"I had no connection with Germany. Then my mother was sick, and I started to go back. And when she died I thought, 'Should I abandon everything?' and it just didn't feel right." So he decided to keep his property in Burlafingen, remodel and extend the house he had grown up in, and move his collection of photographs there.

The tradition of private museums is much stronger in Germany than in Britain, even allowing for >



Parting shots
Portraits from the series "Ecstatic Antibodies", taken by the Nigerian photographer Rotimi Fani-Kayode in 1989, the year he died aged 34

> the Saatchi Collection, which, in its first incarnation in Boundary Road, north London, was a much more modest affair than the huge semi-public institution it has become, and closer to Walther's way. Walther says that the way his project developed was completely serendipitous. He had made no plans to set up a private foundation in Germany; he could just as easily have done it in America. He had no model in mind. But there are comparisons to be drawn between his idea and other private art collections – especially the Sammlung Goetz, in Munich, which houses the contemporary art collected by its owner, Ingvild Goetz, in a specially commissioned building, one of the first by the architects Herzog & de Meuron. Or, to take a more ambitious example, the Insel Hombroich, outside Dusseldorf, a 62-acre park with 15 pavilions designed by the sculptor Erwin Heerich and a former NATO rocket base converted by the architect Tadao Ando: all this to house the art collected by a real-estate broker, Karl Heinrich Müller. What these private collections have in common is that although they do open to the public, a wide audience is in no way crucial to their existence. And their visitors are, mostly, respectful art professionals and students.

The space Walther has created is much the same. "At first it had nothing to do with the public," he says. "I thought to use it as a studio, the big focus was in creating a space where I could conceptualise my work, look at the work of others, develop ideas, put things together...Then, when the plans with the architect were finished, I was leaving for China. I was on the plane and I thought, 'This is wrong. It doesn't fit in.' The new building was going to overpower its surroundings. I know the neighbourhood, I grew up there. So I abandoned the idea and went back to the architects and we decided to turn the original plan upside down, and build the main gallery underground. That turned into a huge engineering job, involving tons of steel, because the structure is sitting in ground water: the Danube is only 2,000 metres away. The white building is really just an entrance, with all the gallery space below." The building was designed by an Ulm-based firm of architects, Braunger Wörtz, in line with Walther's own ideas, influenced by the Tokyo-based SANAA group, winners of the Pritzker prize in 2010.

Then he took over the next-door house, which was empty. "Originally I was going to tear that down, too," he said, "but we decided to turn it into a clean white space inside, but leave the ivy on the outside, let

it grow up to the roof." He renovated the interiors of the open-plan bungalow where his parents had lived since the 1970s, to make another set of galleries, with a living area that opens out on to the garden. Finally, he took over a second house along the street, on the edge of the site, where there are offices and a guest apartment.

When the building work was completed last summer, this idiosyncratic complex became the Walther Collection, a private museum of contemporary and modern photography, open to the public three days a week, by appointment. Officially the galleries are now known as the White Box, the Green House (the one with the ivy), the Black House (the bungalow, in fact painted a dark mushroom-grey), and the Grey House (the offices). They are linked by paved paths that cut across the lawns planted with young fruit trees which, when I visited, had just produced their first crop of rosy apples.

If the neighbours had been irritated by all the building, they showed no sign of it now. "Good morning!" a middle-aged woman called to me cheerily from the yard of the house opposite as I got out of my taxi. The driver, it has to be said, had taken ages to find it, mystified by the warren of narrow residential streets. Neu-Ulm is surrounded by a semi-circle of cultured cities: going clockwise from Munich, there is Zurich, Basel, Strasbourg, Stuttgart, and, farther north, Frankfurt, all of them an easy drive or train-ride away, all with thriving communities of art galleries and collectors. But obviously the Walther Collection hadn't yet become a destination on the taxi-driver's map.

WHAT THESE PRIVATE COLLECTIONS HAVE IN COMMON IS THAT ALTHOUGH THEY DO OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, A WIDE AUDIENCE IS IN NO WAY CRUCIAL TO THEIR EXISTENCE

THE COLLECTION COULD have been a private storehouse with an ad-hoc selection of works on show, but instead it is much more structured. Each year a guest curator will be invited to put together an exhibition across all nine galleries drawn from the collection. The first exhibition, which opened in the summer and runs until the end of April, is dedicated to portraiture, and draws on the African part of the collection, and on the cross-fertilisation of ideas that comes from being shown alongside works by the Bechers and August Sander. The curator is Okwui Enwezor, a Nigerian academic and critic, former artistic director of documenta 11, the international art exhibition that takes place every five years in Kassel. He is also founder and editor of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, and the author of several books about African contemporary art. His exhibition encourages viewers to study cross-cultural similarities in different styles and periods of portraits, to recognise signs of transition within colonial and post-colonial societies, and to see how photographs map cultural change. It's an intellectual as well as a visual challenge, and not for the faint-hearted.

So, in the Green House, one floor is given over to portraits by Seydou Keita, taken in Bamako, the capital of Mali, during the last years of its colonisation by the French, the other to the 60 portraits that make up Sander's first book, "Antlitz der Zeit", published in 1929. Keita's stately black-and-white portraits have become favourites with photo enthusiasts because of his strong visual style. This has little to do with colonial views of the "native" but reveals much about the ways traditional >

South Africa's lost middle class
Portraits from "The Black Photo Album", gathered by Santu Mofokeng

> culture in Mali was being infiltrated from the West: it is there in the clothing, the jewellery, the make-up, the accessories; the way that pairs of women – friends or sisters – stand, holding hands together; but also the way men opt for Western suits, or caps (or, in one picture, disturbingly, pith helmets), to suggest their new ideas of status. Keita's outdoor studio, with its boldly patterned backdrops – often the only real guide to when the picture was made – offered sitters a wide array of props, including scooters, telephones, radios, handbags, wristwatches, even a car, all of which indicate the seductive arrival of consumerism. Sander portraits, too, tell the story of a cultural transition, in this case from a 19th-century rural agricultural economy to an early 20th-century urban, industrialised one and the new social and political hierarchies that developed within it.

In the Black House is a group of typologies by the Bechers, a series of portraits by Malick Sidibé, a studio photographer from Mali 15 years younger than Seydou Keita, and photographs by the Nigerian J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, who, in the face of the fashion for straightened hair and wigs that came from the West in the late 1960s, recorded hundreds of traditional and neo-traditional hairstyles. These elaborate arrangements of plaits and twists and loops, carefully lit and framed, are presented in series that beg comparison to those of the Bechers.

The fourth work here is "The Black Photo Album", a collection of portraits of black South Africans, salvaged from houses in the townships or rural villages, where they had survived for decades. It is presented as a slideshow by Santu Mofokeng, a South African photographer who has spent years piecing together information about the people in the pictures. Most of them were taken at the end of the 19th century, before black South Africans were disenfranchised by apartheid, when some families owned land and others were part of an educated middle class. So used are we to seeing ethnographic photographs of "natives" that we have little idea of what black South Africans really looked like in those days. And here they are, some of them in their colonial Sunday best, the women in long flounced dresses, the men in waistcoats with fob watches, collars and ties. For Mofokeng, the portraits pose many questions. Were these aspirant families challenging the preconceptions of their white colonisers, or making a bid for parity with them? As he points out, these portraits were being taken at the

Starting something
Candice Breitz's video "King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson)"

A collector's role model
"Gas Tanks" (1963-83) by Bernd and Hilla Becher, who inspired Walther

same time that racist policies were being formed against black South Africans. Until more research is done, this can only be a partial index of a society that disappeared.

The wow factor at the Walther Collection lies, without doubt, in the huge underground gallery, which extends beneath the lawns almost to the boundaries of the entire plot. The ceilings are high, and natural light streams down the wide staircase from the glazed box above, though the pictures have to be artificially lit. Here Enwezor has curated a group show of 24 contemporary African photographers and video-makers from many different countries (including artists of African origin who live and work in Europe). South Africans are in the majority, ranging from the 80-year-old landscape photographer David Goldblatt to the young portraitist Nontsikelelo (Lolo) Veleko, but there are also portraits of Dakar by Boubacar Touré Mandémory, swirling streetscapes from Nairobi by James Muriuki, video works from the British artist Grace Ndiritu, and staged portraits by Samuel Fosso, from Cameroon. In so many of the works, Africa's colonial history feeds into its present, as in the collages by Sammy Baloji, from the Democratic Republic of Congo, which combine archival photographs with contemporary landscapes, or the huge panorama by Romuald Hazoumè, of the local goat market, on the site of a former slave market, in Benin.

While I was going round this part of the exhibition, my concentration was broken every so often by the sound of Michael Jackson songs, chanted, or so I thought, by an unaccompanied teenage choir. This turned out to be Candice Breitz's video "King (A Portrait of Michael Jackson)", a tribute to the unifying forces of pop culture. It shows 16 young people, of different ethnic origins, standing alone in a booth. Starting with little grunts and moans, they begin to make their moves, then sing along in that disembodied way people do with headphones on, to tracks from "Thriller". Their individual performances have been spliced together on video, so that they appear to be performing in consort, except they're all interpreting the song in different ways. One or two have dressed for the part and obviously think they are Michael Jackson; others are more reserved – the more uptight they are, the more northern-European they look. The video lasts for 42 minutes, the entire album, and though it sometimes gets in the way when looking at other parts of the show, it's quite hard to leave.

In the upper floor of the white cube is a study room, which offers a sanctuary from everything going on below. Here is a series of self-portraits by the Nigerian-born artist Rotimi Fani-Kayode, made in the 1980s, before his death from an AIDS-related illness in 1989. Although the large, richly coloured tableaux border on the kitsch with their use of ripe fruit and flowers, Yoruba symbols, feathers and body paint, they are gorgeously and defiantly homoerotic, suggestive of Caravaggio and Robert Mapplethorpe, but with a mix of vulnerability and bravado that recalls the first decade of AIDS, and all the fear and tragedies it brought with it.

"It was a difficult step, moving beyond the familiar. I struggled with each individual picture because it was something completely new to me...very foreign. I had to get out of myself and my preconceptions, borders and limits. My existing senses and emotions didn't work in these cultures." Artur Walther was talking about Chinese art when he said this, but he could just as easily have been describing what visitors might feel, faced with this exhibition. To force people to move beyond their preconceptions and think about the cultural implications of what they have seen is the intention here. And for those who can't visit, there is a rather beautiful book, with a full complement of essays, biographies and a selection of pictures which, as far as possible, replicates the whole experience. ■

The Walther Collection (wwwwaltherccollection.com) is open by appointment, Thursday to Sunday, 11am to 5pm, e-mail info@walthercollection.com or call +49 731 1769143. The exhibition "Events of the Self: Portraiture and Social Identity" is on until April 2011. The accompanying book, "Contemporary African Photography from the Walther Collection" by Okwui Enwezor, is published by Steidl (www.steidlville.com)

1 » Archway: (TS-E17mm f/4L) Shooting from close-quarters—but still showing the full archway—was vital to this composition.

2 » Sunset: (EF 70-200mm f/4L IS USM) Using a telephoto zoom lens has created a more dynamic composition here.

3 » Hanging lanterns: (EF-S 17-55mm f/2.8 IS USM) Capturing these beautiful details in low light—and without flash—brings this Turkish market to life.

4 » Doorway: (EF-S 17-55mm f/2.8 IS USM) For this candid portrait speed and discretion were paramount. A high-performance zoom lens created an intimate portrait without disturbing the scene.

5 » Tram: (EF 70-200mm f/4L IS USM) This zoom lens creates a vivid impression of movement without endangering the photographer.

REALISING THE POWER OF IMAGE

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Capturing and preserving these visions for all time has been a task accepted as both a responsibility and a pleasure by artists and visionaries throughout history. But the most powerful historical images are sometimes not so much a reflection of a subject as a projection of the person who captured it. An artist's efforts will always be conditioned by the distorting effects of talent, creativity, personal interpretation or pure genius.

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Canon EF lenses fulfil this role and add rich 'change your lens, change your story' flexibility to the photographer's palette, while Canon's premium photo and document Pixma printers extend the chain of purity by using CMOS technology to produce high quality photo prints.

A clear vision »

For over seventy years, photographers around the world have treasured the reliably superior performance of Canon's equipment and the refreshing functionality of its innovation. They have connected with the Canon view that considering the interests of society and the environment – embodied in Canon's kyosei corporate philosophy 'to live and work together for the common good' – is an integral part of good business practice.

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The Lenses • The EF range

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EF-S 17-55mm f/2.8 IS USM
Specifically designed for APS-C cameras this lens provides outstanding performance even in low light thanks to a constant f/2.8 aperture right throughout the zoom range, and a 3-stop Image Stabilizer.

EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM
Seen as an essential lens by professionals this high quality telephoto zoom incorporates a 4-stop Image Stabilizer to ensure great hand held results. This latest design gives faster AF and focusing down to 1.2m.

EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM
A highly versatile walk around lens with a 3-stop Image Stabilizer and constant f/4 aperture throughout the zoom range. Its robust construction means it is as suited to harsh desert conditions as to the beach.

EF 100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM
A fast aperture macro lens that is the first to incorporate Hybrid Image Stabilizer (IS) technology to combat both angular and shift camera shake, making it ideal for handheld macro photography.

Canon

JANE BOWN

In a 60-year career with the Observer, **Jane Bown** has taken many great pictures. To start a new series, we asked her to choose one by someone else that she wished she had taken

THE PICTURE I'VE chosen is by a woman photographer, Ski Harrison. I saw it in a book she once sent me and I liked it, and I thought it was the way I used to see photographs – I've always taken solitary, lonely figures – and this is just a funny bumbling old woman in a black coat. It's also my kind of picture because it has a touch of humour in it.

I used to take pictures on holiday: we'd go somewhere with the children and I'd see something that I liked. I remember taking a picture of two postmen sitting on a log that I thought was good. I never looked upon myself as a portrait photographer. That was something that came to me from the *Observer*. They decided I was quick – "Send Jane," they'd say, "she'll only be six minutes." And sometimes that really dropped me in it. But it's true. I don't take up time fussing. I'm in and out in a flash. And I'm not obtrusive. Usually the first picture is the best one, or the last. I never stayed around. I didn't know how to.

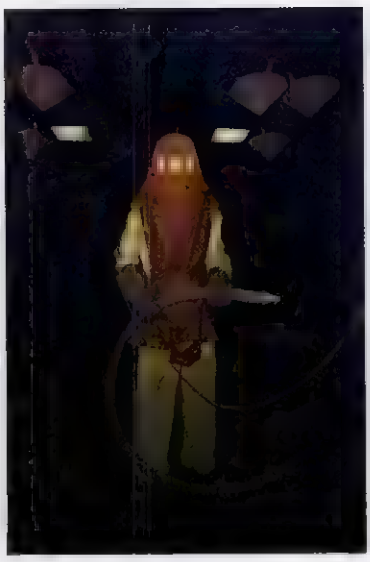
I didn't always work in black-and-white. I worked on the *Observer* colour magazine for four years, but I was always nerve-racked. I never knew what exposure to give. Whereas in black-and-white I know exactly, in daylight, what's needed. They sent me to do poets, and ponies – they always wanted lots and lots of pictures. On the paper I was quite good at getting that one shot.

I used to collect photographs that I thought were good, cut them out from papers and magazines, but they were usually of disasters – and I've never done that sort of thing. You always get good pictures from disasters. But mine are these odd lonely pictures, and that's why this one stood out. It's quite a bold picture. It's got a feeling. Very French. If I'd taken that picture, I'd have been very pleased.

Jane Bown was talking to Liz Jobey

LEFT A picture of Bown's own: camera on a tripod in St Mark's Square, Venice, 1977

"I saw it in a book she once sent me and I thought it was the way I used to see photographs... It's my kind of picture because it has a touch of humour"



THE £1,000 PHOTO COLLECTION

Photography as art on your wall is going through a boom. We gave our art director, Graham Black, a challenge: start a collection for £1,000. **Jasper Rees** tagged along

© NICHOLAS HUGHES COURTESY THE PHOTOGRAPHERS GALLERY LONDON © DARREN ALMOND COURTESY WHITE CUBE

PICTURE A BLANK wall. Imagine that it needs filling, preferably with images that you are prepared to cohabit with in the medium-to-long term. Paintings would be nice, but you know what you like and you don't currently have the requisite arm and leg to meet the inflated prices at, say, Frieze. That leaves photography.

You could take the cheap route and hang blown-up family snaps taken by a studio that makes all children look like catalogue models. Or you could follow Graham.

Graham Black is *Intelligent Life*'s art director, a youthful veteran who has done stints at *Record Mirror*, >

The pictures Graham bought

TOP LEFT Bill Jackson "Sand Blaster", "Welder" and "Man in a Mask", 1982-84; edition of 300, £35 each from Troika Editions

BOTTOM LEFT Darren Almond: "Yamal", 2010; edition of 50, signed and numbered, £235 from White Cube

ABOVE Nicholas Hughes: "In Darkness Visible, Verse I #20", 2007, £470 from the Photographers' Gallery, London

> the *Observer* and the FT's *How to Spend It* magazine. It is established that he has an eye for images. But does he have an eye for a bargain? To guide beginners like me, he has undertaken to start a photography collection without breaking the bank: his mission is to see what he can get for £1,000. I'm tagging along to ask questions such as "what exactly is resin print?", "please can we buy some shots of Shackleton in Antarctica?" and, for starters, "why collect photography in the first place?"

We meet outside the Photographers' Gallery in central London. Graham looks very much the art director in grey flannel cap, strong-rimmed specs and three days' growth. So why, I ask, buy photographs? "It's cheaper than buying art and not as convoluted or rarefied a market to get into," says Graham. "You can go to IKEA and buy a hideous canvas print of a brightly coloured flower that will cost you 50 quid. Or you can go and get yourself a signed, limited edition photographic print from an up-and-coming artist."

IT'S POSSIBLE TO BUY INTENSELY PLEASURABLE PHOTOGRAPHS FOR FAR LESS THAN £400

We go in and start leafing through boxes to see what's available. Variety is the answer. We're first shown a series of colour portraits of the black urban poor in America, taken in the 1970s by the young Danish photographer Jacob Holdt. They are grimly arresting,

Jazz, cars and good prices
FAR LEFT Photographer unknown: "Miles Davis" c1959, £105 from Getty Images Gallery
ABOVE & LEFT Photographer unknown, c1960s, £10 the pair from a Brighton street market

good for a gallery space, but would you want to live with them? And pay a slightly eye-watering £500 for a signed edition? That'll blow half the budget in one. We move on to a beautiful and very quirky set of pictures by Angus Boulton showing dilapidated gyms in east Berlin. They have a lapsed Brunelleschian grandeur. "But you'd need a few to get an idea of them," says Graham. At £300 a pop, that's not on.

Prices, it emerges as we keep on looking, are determined by a number of factors: not only the size of the image, but also the size of the print run. Exclusivity drives up price but also collectability. Shackletoniana costs around £7,000, so that's out. The question then arises of whether you are buying to invest or to enjoy, for business or for pleasure. Graham argues that it's possible to do both. There are pictures here which have been bought by Charles Saatchi, so seasoned investors are lurking. But Graham's eye is drawn to a series of sepulchral nightscapes by Nicholas Hughes. Radiating their own internal light, they feature filigree trees with branches like capillaries. They evoke the intensity of late Victorian gothic. "Some of these are several exposures," explains Graham, "and involve a lot of work in the dark room." He plumps for one with a lone arboreal frond flopping like a forelock across the spectral moon. At £400 plus VAT (£470) he reckons it's a steal.

It's possible to buy intensely pleasurable photographs for far less than that. When we next meet, Graham produces some prints he has found in a street market in Brighton, where he lives: three sizeable black-and-white prints of early-1960s American street scenes, handprinted on hard AGFA card. They're not in the best >

The other side of the lens
Bert Hardy: Ingrid Bergman (taking a break from filming "Visit to Italy", in Naples), 1953, £105 from Getty Images Gallery

> condition, but they feature classic post-war American car designs – the subject of Graham's college dissertation. "They are so evocative of a period," he says. And they cost £10, the pair.

He has also been to White Cube, the contemporary art gallery in London, and found an impressionistic image by Darren Almond of a snowstorm on a railtrack in Murmansk, taken from the point of view of a driver. "I spend half my life on trains," says Graham, "which is why I was drawn to this." It's in an edition of 50, and cost £235. "Not a huge amount for an artist represented by an internationally renowned gallery."

You don't have to leave home to start a collection. Online galleries make shopping easy. Graham points me towards a site called Troika Editions. He is attracted to it because it looks curated: they've already made some of the taste choices for you. At £1,500 the larger limited editions of three are out of range, but smaller prints can be bought for as little as £35. We nose about.

I'm drawn to a series of pictures by Victoria Hall which re-enact classic paintings, with Hall herself as the subject. "A bit contrived for me," says Graham. He's more taken with Matthew Booth's series of bleached-out monochrome interiors and Nicolas Ferrando's re-enactment of famous photographs with the subjects' heads obscured by brown paper bags. But then his eye is caught by masking of a less theatrical kind: a series of figures in industrial protective aprons shot at the Potterton factory in Warwickshire. Bill Jackson's homages to B-movie sci-fi are shot in black-and-white, then handpainted to impart a russety textural warmth at odds with the industrial subject. "Normally when you see portraits of workers, it's gritty reportage. But these are all about the uniforms. They look weirdly contemporary, but of another time." One on its own would be meaningless, so Graham plumps for three at £35 each from an edition of 300.

With seven photographs in the bag, he has spent £820. Our last stop is the one place you can buy more or less anything, but especially hot shots of 20th-century icons: Getty Images Gallery, the giant photographic agency. Graham calls it "the supermarket option". Their archive contains 80m pictures starting at the dawn of photography. Most of them, so far as you can tell in the shop, are of Marilyn Monroe and Audrey Hepburn. Graham is drawn towards more vintage-car porn, but is carefully steered away.

At Getty it's a case of avoiding the obvious. A couple of Slim Aarons's poolscapes draw Graham's eye, and some generic 1960s skiing snaps. We compare the detail on two dramatic sailing shots, one resin-coated, slightly fuzzier and in an unlimited edition, the other fibre-printed and twice the price. We need to decide. Graham is taken by a black-and-white shot of Miles Davis looking superbly cool. Sold for £105.

Room for one more. Graham can't decide and asks me. I have no hesitation in nominating an intriguing side-on picture of Ingrid Bergman as you never see her, peering down into a box camera, a much-photographed woman taking a photograph herself. It puts us £30 over budget. But in every other sense, very much the richer. ■

STARTING POINTS

Getty Images Gallery Eastcastle Street, London W1, +44 (0) 20 7291 5380. Mon to Fri, 10am to 5.30pm; Sat, noon to 5.30pm. www.gettyimagesgallery.com. Classic archive images from some of the world's most respected photographers. Whenever they can, they print from the original negative.

Morrison Hotel Gallery Prince St, New York, +1 212 941 8770. www.morrisonhotelgallery.com. A music specialist, focusing on classic rock images from the past 50 years.

The Photographers' Gallery London shop closed for refurbishment, but open online. +44 (0)20 7087 9320. www.photonet.org.uk. The place to discover emerging talent as well as reacquainting yourself with some of the more familiar names in contemporary photography.

Proud Galleries +44 (0)20 7839 4942. www.proud.co.uk info@proudgalleries.co.uk. Another music specialist, strong on British bands and singers of the 1970s and 1980s.

Troika Editions +44 (0)20 7833 2330. www.troikaeditions.co.uk. The place to start your collection: well-chosen unknown and up-and-coming photographers to suit every budget

White Cube +44 (0)20 7930 5373. www.whitecube.com If you're leaning towards the fine-art end of the spectrum, this is the place to begin. ~ GRAHAM BLACK

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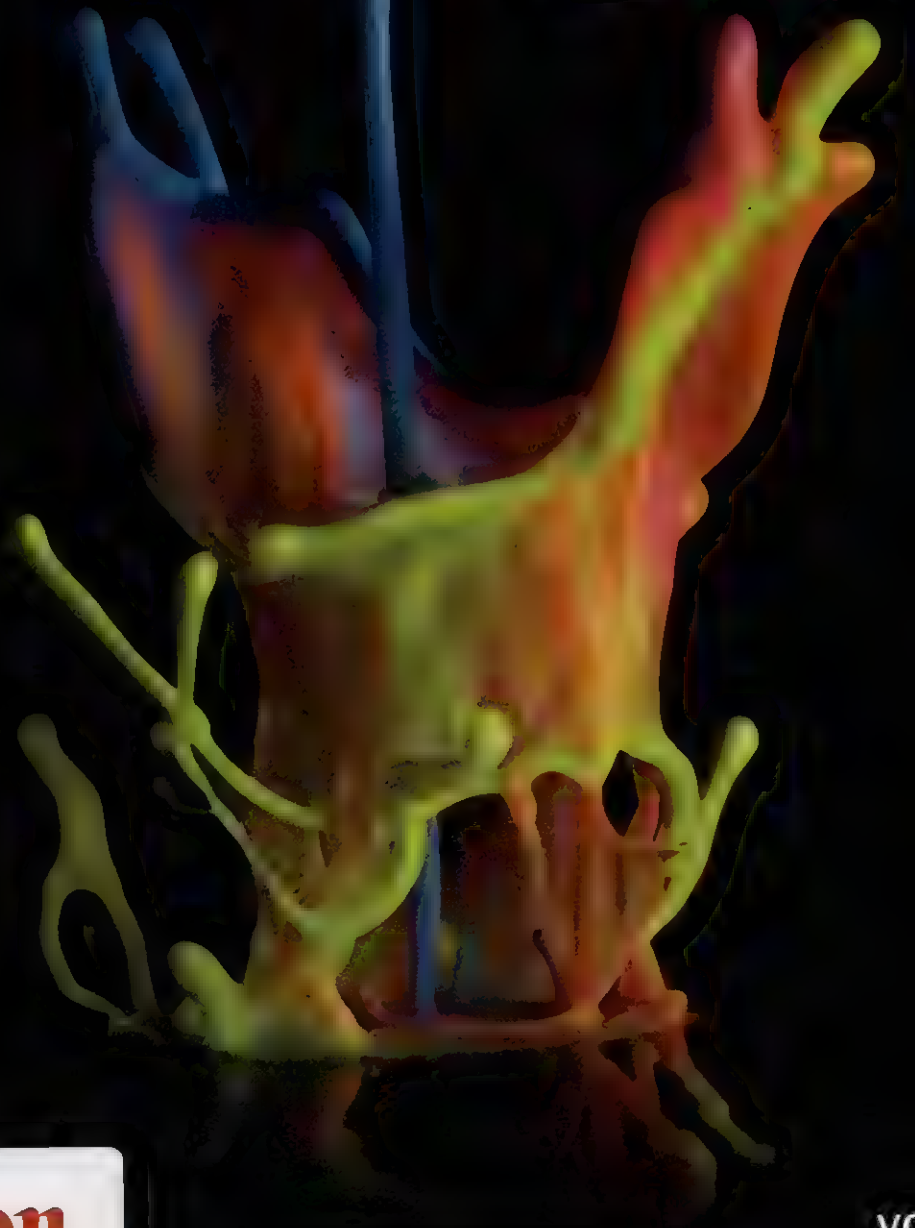

Canon

you can

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Intelligent Life, the award-winning quarterly magazine of life, culture and style from The Economist, is now on the iPad.

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* Ranng by McPheters, a consulting firm, November 2010. iPad is a trademark of Apple, Inc.

CULTURE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY [illegible] MARDT

Less is even more

For years now, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam has been partly closed for rebuilding. **William Fiennes** likes it better that way – less Gallery Fatigue, more time for Vermeer and Rembrandt

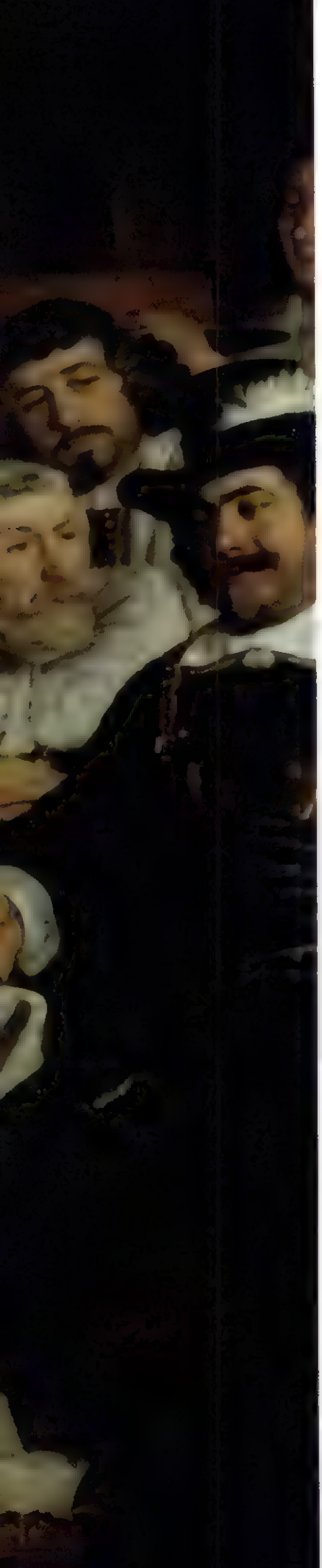
SOME FRIENDS HAD a spare ticket to a Radiohead concert at the Heineken Music Hall in Amsterdam. I'd never flown anywhere just for a night, and I'd probably have said no if I'd had time to think and feel guilty about it. But I wanted to see the band, I'd never been to Amsterdam, and it was close enough to my birthday for me to call the trip a present to myself. I didn't have to rush back early the next morning. I'd have the best part of a day to walk the canals and see the famous Vermeers in the Rijksmuseum.

Strange, in a way, that I was so intent on going to the Rijksmuseum. Visiting new cities, I'd never gravitated to the museums. In my teens and 20s I'd traipsed round hallowed national galleries more out of a sense of cultural obligation than private hunger. I worried that it meant some failure on my part, that I couldn't respond to paintings or sculptures the way I did to books or pieces of music. The image that stays with me from the National Gallery's blockbuster Caravaggio exhibition in 2005 is a man in a tweed jacket standing at the back of the crowd, looking at "The Martyrdom of Saint Ursula" through binoculars.

Still, I was determined to visit the Rijksmuseum. I wanted to see Vermeer's painting "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter". Nothing special, of course, in falling for a Vermeer ("Everybody loves Vermeer, except me," Francis Bacon protested), but I loved that picture: the stillness; the woman's concentration; the pale blue smock over her pregnancy; the mystery of what she might be reading; the way the inner world implied by reading was equal to the world represented by the map hanging on the wall behind her. I'd stuck a postcard of the painting above my desk, and wondered if I'd ever get to see it in the flesh.

So I was excited that morning in 2006 when I set out from the hotel near Central Station. I liked the wateriness of Amsterdam, the way the tram bells tolled like clocks in medieval churches, the longhorn handlebars of the bicycles and the upright postures of their helmetless riders, the varieties of tulip bulbs on sale in the flower market along the Singel Canal: Flaming Kiss, Line Dancer, Chinatown, Honkey Tonk, Lemon Snow Parrot, American Dream. I walked with a pilgrim's sense of purpose. I was seeing Vermeer everywhere. The waitress in the café on Utrechtsestraat wore a blue headscarf. I knew how to get to the Rijksmuseum, but asked her for directions anyway. She told me, in perfect English, then added: "But I think it might be closed."

She was half right. The actual Rijksmuseum was closed, and had been since 2003; it isn't expected to open again until 2013, when the overhaul by the Spanish architects Cruz & Ortiz is completed. But a small part of the collection was, and still is, on display in the southern wing: an exhibition of paintings and other objects that's more an idea of the Rijksmuseum than the thing itself, or even a different museum altogether, a museum with such distinctive character and impact I'm sad to think it will only exist for ten years, before >



A declaration of abundance
LEFT The author with "Banquet in Celebration of the Treaty of Münster" by Bartholomeus van der Helst (1648). RIGHT Top billing for Vermeer

The temporary almost-Rijksmuseum has turned out to be my dream of a museum

> being subsumed once more into its parent body.

"Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" was in Room 10, alongside two other famous paintings by Vermeer, "View of Houses in Delft" and "The Kitchen Maid". I wasn't disappointed. I stood in front of each painting for a long time. I stepped closer, seeing the pocks, blemishes and nails in the white wall behind the kitchen maid, and followed the line that ran down the middle of her headscarf and continued down her nose and the cleft in her chin and the front of her tunic and became the stream of milk, the line of her concentration. I peered at light glinting off rivets on the blue chairs either side of the woman reading the letter, and saw how the rivets were part of an arrangement of vertical and horizontal lines, a grid in which the woman's inner life was fixed and centred. Visitors – tour groups, couples, art students with Daler-Rowney sketch pads under their arms – gathered round those three pictures, held by more than their reputations. Each painting conveyed the experience of concentration, of being fully absorbed in whatever you were doing; it made you part of a moment of absolute focus and self-forgetfulness. Even as I left Room 10 to see Rembrandt's "The Night Watch" downstairs, I was looking forward to the day I came and stood in front of that wall again.

I went back this September. The temporary almost-Rijksmuseum has turned out to be my dream of a museum, more like a private collection in size and scope, far from the brain-wearying abundances of a Met or Louvre or Prado, still full of wonders (many of them surprises) yet small enough to experience without any symptoms of Gallery Fatigue, that miserable subspecies of exhaustion characterised by aching feet and legs, glutted eyes, and an itch to get to the café as soon as possible.

Moments of absolute focus
ABOVE "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" by Johannes Vermeer
BELOW, L-R William Fiennes studying the Vermeers: "View of Houses in Delft", "The Kitchen Maid" aka "The Milkmaid", "The Love Letter"

The refurbished Rijksmuseum is expected to have more than 7,000 pieces on view in 80 halls, but here are 14 rooms with about 250 objects on display, all of them manifestations of the Netherlands in the 17th century, so that to visit this short-lived accident of a museum is to find yourself steeped in the Golden Age of Rembrandt and Spinoza, of Delft porcelain and the thriving textile industries of Haarlem and Leiden, of the Dutch East and West India Companies and the Dutch Republic's global dominance in shipping and trade. "Scarce any subject occurs more frequent in the discourses of ingenious men than that of the marvellous progress of this little state," wrote one Englishman, William Aglionby, in 1669. The Netherlands, William Temple agreed four years later, "was the envy of some, the fear of others, and the wonder of all neighbours".

The Rijksmuseum has always been a celebration of this national achievement and capacity. The Nationale Konstgallerij which opened in May 1800 – 200 paintings in eight rooms of the Huis ten Bosch palace in The Hague – was intended to be a national symbol, a Dutch answer to the Louvre, which had opened in Paris in 1793. The growing collection moved to Amsterdam in 1808, first to the former town hall, then to a mansion called the Trippenhuis; King William I renamed it the Rijksmuseum (both the rijk or "rich" museum, and the museum of the Rijk, the realm or empire); the present Rijksmuseum, designed by Pierre Cuypers, opened in 1885. Today, the building is garbed in scaffolding and stands under the jurisdiction of two vast blue tower cranes, but still your eyes are carried skywards by slate roof towers tipped with statues, weather-vanes and pinnacles, and you can imagine its cathedral impact seen from a 19th-century distance, rising from the flatness.

Visitors pass through a traffic-sooty arch off Hobbemastraat and take a herringbone brick path, patrolled by pigeons, through a dowdy parterre garden. It's hardly an auspicious beginning. But the dark, low-ceilinged ground-floor rooms are quick to impress you with worldly power and glory. The widescreen canvas of Bartholomeus van der Helst's "Banquet in Celebration of the Treaty of Münster" shows a group of civic guards in Amsterdam celebrating the end of the Eighty Years War with Spain in 1648. Civic guards? They could be carousing senators >

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RIJKSMUSEUM

> or princes, their banquet a pageant of plumed hats, embroidered doublets, gleaming cuirasses, flouncy ruffs and a showy finish of sashes and spurs, a background maid holding aloft a turkey pie, topped with an actual turkey. This preliminary declaration of abundance is accompanied by reminders of maritime supremacy and commercial reach: a model of a 74-gun Dutch man-of-war; a suit of cavalry armour with armadillo layers over the hips and shoulders; a painting of the Dutch East India Company's trading base at Hougly in Bengal. In a portrait by Ferdinand Bol, Admiral de Ruyter, commander-in-chief of the Dutch navy, is shown resting his right elbow casually on a globe. The whole world is his to lean on.

One room celebrates silverware: dishes, tazzas, salt cellars, ewers and basins in the intricate auricular style of Paulus and Adam van Vianen. Another is devoted to Delftware: blue and white porcelain bowls, jars, candlesticks, jugs, tankards, stacked obelisk tulip vases, even a porcelain violin. But nothing conveys more vividly, or strangely, the wealth of a burgeoning merchant class than the dolls' house belonging to Petronella Oortman – not just a house for dolls, but an elaborate model of the Oortmans' home: nine rooms in a cabinet veneered with tortoiseshell and pewter, hundreds of household objects reproduced in miniature, in the original materials – laundry baskets, irons and chamber pots; formal chairs and speckled mirrors; a nursery bed canopied in blue-trimmed yellow silk; a backgammon board complete with die and chequers open on the salon table. And all this – the warships and guns, the silver plates and chalices, the porcelain violins, the *World of Interiors* microcosm of the Oortmans' house – means that by the time you get to the paintings in the lighter, more open rooms upstairs, you've lived for a moment in the world that made them possible.

I'd come for Vermeer, of course. But almost everywhere I looked something caught and held my attention: Franz Hals's "Portrait of Martige Voogt"; the life-crammed households of Jan Steen; an interior by Pieter de Hooch showing a mother combing her child's hair for lice; Rembrandt's "The Syndics of the Amsterdam Drapers' Guild"; or his "Jeremia Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem", the prophet resting his head on his hand while the city whose fall he'd predicted burns in a gold haze; or the cloud-swathe turban in his "Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul", his face with its high, arched eyebrows emerging from depths of black and brown. These rooms are, not least, a marvel of groceries: the creamy yellow cut surfaces of ancestral Edams in Floris van Dijck's "Still Life with Cheeses"; oysters, grapes, hazelnuts, walnuts, and salt and pepper spilling from rolled cones of paper torn from almanacs in Pieter Claesz's "Still Life with Turkey Pie"; the two lemons in Willem Kalf's "Still Life with Silver Jug", one peeled, another entire, its reflection in the side of the silver jug like the ghost of a lemon; or the lemon in Willem Claesz Heda's "Still Life with Gilt Goblet", a twist of rind dangling from the green table edge, one end sliced off to show the pithy cartwheel of segments, a halved pip lodged among the vesicles.

My eyes were full of lemons when I turned into Room 10 and looked for the Vermeers on the far wall. The kitchen maid was still pouring milk into the bowl. The woman was still sewing in the Delft doorway. But "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter" was missing. Another, much less compelling painting by Vermeer, "The Love Letter", hung in its place. A panel read: "Due to restoration, this painting is temporarily not on show". And underneath this message was a postcard-sized reproduction of "Woman in Blue Reading a Letter", just so you could look at what you weren't able to look at. It seemed that whenever I went to the Rijksmuseum, something I'd expected to find wouldn't be there.

It didn't matter. It wasn't the Vermeers that held me in Room 10 this time, but a group of pictures hanging on the wall opposite them: five still lifes by Adriaen Coorte, a painter I'd never heard of. Coorte probably lived in Middleburg; he produced about a hundred signed and dated paintings between 1683 and 1707; beyond that, little is known about him. His still lifes aren't the lavish, cluttered tables of Pieter Claesz or Floris van Dijck. Instead, he devotes each small picture to one kind of fruit or vegetable: a bowl of wild strawberries, a gooseberry twig, four apricots, three peaches, a bundle of green-white asparagus stalks bound with twine, miracles of light and colour set on a plain stone ledge with a crack in it, nothing else visible

TIPS FOR YOUR TRIP

When to go Spring, to avoid the crowds. The Rijksmuseum is open all year round bar New Year's Day, from 9am to 6pm. Adult admission is €12.50; under-18s get in free.

How to get there With ease: it's five minutes' walk from the Van Gogh Museum. The city centre is best tackled on foot or by bicycle.

Where to stay The family-run Hotel Aalders is in the museum quarter; doubles from €89 (www.hotelaalders.nl). Just as convenient is Hotel Roemer, a snazzy boutique hotel; doubles from €94 (www.hotelroemer.nl). And the luxurious Hotel Piet Hein has rooms overlooking the Vondelpark; doubles from €135 (www.hotelpiethein.com).

Don't miss The Rijksmuseum's show of Gabriel Metsu's paintings (December 16th to March 11th), capturing daily life in the Golden Age. Cobracafé, round the corner, has affordable food by day, cocktails at night, and a pond for ice skating. Mosey through the Vondelpark, a national heritage monument and bohemian mecca, to check out the Blue Tea House, Rent a Skate, the Film Museum, an open-air theatre and the Centrum de Roos – a rose garden with over 70 species. ~ JOE PARHAM

in the black backgrounds. Coorte's attention to these commonplace natural forms – the veins of gooseberries, the orange speckling of peach skins – has the force of religious devotion. These could be the first apricots, the first peaches. They could be the last.

Rembrandt's "Night Watch" has a room to itself, and it's the painting the museum holds back till the end, its star attraction. So a tour of the museum ends as it begins, in front of an enormous portrait of civic guards, Rembrandt's picture of the company of Amsterdam arquebusiers led by Captain Frans Banninck Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch a reminder of the partying captains in van der Helst's "Banquet". But I liked to think of the museum's story ending with those tiny still lifes by Adriaen Coorte – all the wealth and power vaunted by the downstairs rooms, the rowdy world of burgomasters, admirals, arquebusiers and syndics reduced to a handful of fruit on a piece of broken stone.

We were allowed in at seven the next morning to take photographs. No visitors until nine, but the cleaners were busy. A slim silver-haired woman, all in black apart from white cotton gloves like a snooker referee, dusted the cannons of the model warship. She stepped back to check their alignment: dusting often nudged them off-kilter. "I want to have them all looking straight at you," she said. ■

Carefully aligned
LEFT Students peer at "William Rex", by C. Moesman
OPPOSITE "Still Life with Peaches" by Adriaen Coorte

THE PLAYLIST

Rocking Africa

Our regular contributor J.M. Ledgard covers much of Africa for The Economist. This is the soundtrack to his life

One of the pleasures of being a foreign correspondent in Africa is loading up the iPod for a road trip. Raucous works well in a Land Cruiser banging around the scrublands, especially since I lost the hearing in one ear to machinegun fire in Afghanistan. Buoyant helps in negotiating cities by day. Classic and subtle is best after an equatorial clockwork sunset.

GETATCHEW MEKURIA AND THE EX Musicawi Silt from the album Moa Anbessa (download from Beemp3)
Roll down the windows, hit the pedal and damn the potholes. Mixing Mekuria's Ethiopian jazz with The Ex's Dutch anarchist punk, this track is a burst of sunshine when you're driving.

GUACHASS Dirty Harry (Amazon)
In Congo, the Uruguayan peacekeepers turned the dial to 11 for these Montevideo punk rockers. Ramones clones are not usually my thing, but it worked with steak, booze, guns and beetles whirring about the campfire.

TABU LEY ROCHEREAU Sorozo (iTunes)
From Congo comes the one and only, the top cat, Tabu Ley Rochereau, whose early live recordings lure you back through the decades. He was among the first to add Brazilian and Cuban rhythms to Congolese music. This track, recorded with Orchestre Afrisa, puts a smile on the morning.

SIGUR ROS Untitled # 4 from () (iTunes)
I once had to take Jonsi Birgisson out on the town in Prague. He was a gentleman whirlwind. As lead singer of Sigur Ros, he is also one of the few Icelanders still solvent. This track is pure accelerant, and an *Economist* writer can hardly complain about its anonymity.

FELA KUTI Zombie from Zombie (iTunes)
Nigeria is coming to dominate African pop – often with dross. All the more reason to listen to Fela Kuti, the Yoruba giant who died in 1997 and whose Afrobeat is ever more revered. This track from 1976 has become iconic: think James Brown with even bigger appetites and a conscience.

VIA AFRIKA Hey Boy from Via Afrika (iTunes)
Out of South Africa, in 1983, came a white pop-punk band that broke the mould. This is a contagious hit, just waiting for the bubblegum revival.

ROKIA TRAORE M'Bifo from Bowmboi (Amazon)
I saw Rokia play in Bamako and was entranced. The child of Malian diplomats, she adds singer-songwriter influences to the clarity of the traditional music. This live take, recorded in Italy, is slow and intense.

MAGDALENA KOZENA Nadeje (Hope) from Songs My Mother Taught Me (iTunes)
Many of Africa's conservatoires have closed. Outside South Africa, classical music is restricted to church, alas. Everyone needs a diva and mine is the Czech soprano Magdalena Kozena. With Kozena at the piano, giving her rich and subtle take on Martinu, you can picture yourself in a conservatoire – or a conservatory, in high summer, with the windows open to the lawns.

THE VISUAL CV

Sherlock Holmes

The BBC's hit "Sherlock" is just one of 230 films or television series featuring the great man. Matthew Sweet picks the best

1891 Illustrations by Sidney Paget

Arthur Conan Doyle created Sherlock Holmes – but put more energy into trying to kill him off. So perhaps it's his illustrator who conjured him for us: the lean, feline, frock-coated figure, steepling his fingers in a smoke-wreathed armchair. Paget denied having a model other than the text – but he himself had a long jaw, aquiline nose and high temples. I suspect it was all done with mirrors.

1916 William Gillette

Gillette gave Holmes two things that Conan Doyle failed to supply: a libido and a dirty great curved piece of smoking apparatus. One of them became a fixture, the other remained an act of transgression – as all the critics told Gillette, when he played the great detective in his own stage drama, juiced from Doyle's short stories. The author, however, was unconcerned. Gillette cabled Doyle across the Atlantic: "May I marry Holmes?" Back came the reply: "Do what you like with him."

1920s Eille Norwood

The orthochromatic film stock of the silent days was unforgiving: every crack and fissure in the face of Eille Norwood has been preserved for posterity. With black lips, graveyard demeanour, and his hair shaved at the temples for a cerebral widow's peak, he played detective in dozens of British two-reelers – the first Holmes with a touch of Transylvania. When he confronts the Hound of the Baskervilles – hand-tinted with a phosphor glow – it's hard to decide who seems most unearthly.

1939 Basil Rathbone

Viewers thrown by the 2010 "Sherlock", take note: Rathbone was the first self-consciously period Holmes, in the dry-iced Victorian world of the Fox backlot. After two films, his bosses felt the Nazis were a more pressing problem and retooled Doyle's famous speech about the Hun ("such a wind as never blew on England yet") for Hitler. The delivery is knife-sharp. The cause would not have been more urgent if they had booked Churchill himself.

1959-68 Peter Cushing
When Cushing played Holmes for Hammer, the producer congratulated him for having lost weight for the part – his cheekbones looked sharp enough to cut the pages of the *Strand*. It was, however, dysentery that did it. In the Hammer "Hound" and in a subsequent series for the BBC, Cushing attacked the part as if relieved not to be playing another psychopath. For a man best known as Frankenstein, he is one of the screen's least clinical Sherlocks.

1980s and 1990s Jeremy Brett
For a performance that's now regarded as definitive, Brett's Holmes is a long way from any of his predecessors, and from Conan Doyle. This is Sherlock the addict: twitching, moody, capricious. Watch him in his white nightgown, stretching a colourless hand towards the fags on the mantelpiece – or yelping his way through dinner, veins thrumming with cocaine. Despite this oddness, he's the Holmes in our heads, and the reason why several more recent ones – Robert Downie Jr, Rupert Everett – seem like pretenders.

1970 Robert Stephens
In the 1970s the intellectuals claimed Holmes. In "The Seven-Per-Cent Solution" Nicol Williamson underwent analysis; in "The Private Life of...", Robert Stephens even talked of a relationship with Watson – albeit as a ploy to avoid having to impregnate a Russian ballerina. Billy Wilder, directing, had Holmes ruled by his heart, not his head. In the character – and the actor, too – it provoked a constitutional crisis.

2010 Benedict Cumberbatch
With his cantilevered cheekbones, staring eyes and the glaciated attitude of the *Ubermensch*, Benedict Cumberbatch could have been painted by Munch. We ought to dislike him. But the modern-dress Sherlock, a big hit for the BBC this year and due back soon, is also a sad casualty of his own brilliance. He doesn't smile much. Dr Watson (Martin Freeman) was never more important as a link between the warm human world and the cold hinterland of when-you-have-eliminated-the-impossible.

GETTY, ALAMY, REX, RONALD GRANT, BBC

BOOKS

NOTES ON A VOICE

No 4 Chaucer

In an obscure poem addressed to "Adam scriveyn", Geoffrey Chaucer scolds his dandruff-plagued scribe for copying down his work incorrectly. This can be read as livid vitriol, humorous jotting or ironic self-deprecation. Serious or not, Chaucer's anxiety about being misconstrued was justified, as his verse (in the original manuscript) was largely unpunctuated. Raw, flexible, vivacious, it encourages myriad readings. He can appear erratic, with inconsistent word order, unpredictable grammar, mid-sentence tense shifts, missing pronouns and double, triple, even quadruple negatives. Alan Gaylord went so far as to say that "there is no such thing as Chaucer's own line", such were the efforts required to chisel a coherent voice out of his columns of free-flowing verse.

And yet this most aural of poets speaks to us from the second half of the 14th century in a voice as distinctive as the "sondry folk" of his "Canterbury Tales". Melodious and brusque, sardonic and celebratory, earnest and tongue-in-cheek, Chaucer's verse revels in its own dynamic ambiguity. He invites us to a bustling verbal marketplace, like that in the final lines of "The House of Fame", only to rise above the mêlée, deftly out-selling the competing voices of his characters.

Golden rule Polyvocality. Continually inhabiting other voices – squabbling birds, raucous pilgrims or flat-footed narrators – Chaucer shows us his world without telling us what to make of it. But make no mistake; judgment is wrung from us by the bucket-load. His claim, in "A Treatise on the Astrolabe", to be a mere "lewd compilator" of other voices is a classic example of his attempt to eschew responsibility for that judgment.

Key decisions Writing in English. While more straight-laced contemporaries like John Gower preferred French or Latin, Chaucer asserted the artistic value of the vernacular. His language was as current as his subjects. Not that he ignores European culture, which he had experienced broadly as a diplomat, bureaucrat and courtier. He often alludes to medieval Italian writers and racks up 1,000 borrowings from French. To read Chaucer is to realise that language can break free of geography and class.

Strong points Fast and funny. His Middle English may take some getting used to, but its instinctive mirth leaps off the page. He is never lethargic: you bounce along his five-stress lines, danced through the stories by sheer rhythmic jollity. Chaucer may not have been the chuckling bard of popular imagination, but his ears are always pricked for nuanced humour, whether light, dark or bawdy. He has a penchant for pun and innuendo: his characters are enmeshed in insinuations. These are often tantalisingly subtle, as when he refers to the Prioress's "softe" lips or the exemplary Knight's dirty tunic, and make for a depth that rewards rereading.

Favourite trick Conjuring new words to make lines rhyme or scan. For instance, in "The Second Nun's Tale": "For pure chaastnesse of virginitee". Chasteness, as opposed to chastity, does not appear again in English for almost 200 years. Aside from being practical, these forms lend tremendous variety.

Role models Three Italian poets: Petrarch, Boccaccio (both of whom Chaucer may have met on a trip to Italy in 1373) and Dante. Boccaccio's "Decameron" lent the inspiration and narrative template for "The Canterbury Tales". More technically, Geoffrey de Vinsauf's "Poetria Nova", a passage from which Chaucer lifted for "Troilus and Criseyde", armed him with rhetorical devices.

Typical sentence One mingling the profane with the profound, such as the Miller's declaration, with its lewd pun, that "an housbonde shal nat been inquisityf/Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf." ~ JOE PARHAM

The Complete Works of Chaucer in Middle English *on the Kindle, £199*
The Canterbury Tales *on the iPad, free*

ILLUSTRATION **KATHRYN RATHKE**

FOUND IN TRANSLATION

A film-maker's tale

AUTHOR **Philippe Claudel**
ORIGINAL TITLE **Le Rapport de Brodeck**
ORIGINAL LANGUAGE **French** 2007
TRANSLATOR **John Cullen** 2009
TITLE IN ENGLISH **Brodeck's Report**
paperback, out now, MacLehose Press

Do we need another Holocaust novel? Possibly not, but we do need this book, which derives heft from the Holocaust but is not really about it at all. It's full of metaphor and allegory, but unlike, say, Camus' "The Plague", it doesn't omit the particular horrors of Kristallnacht or Auschwitz, as seen through the maimed psyche of its narrator, Brodeck. Its power lies in its focus on the pungent residue. Claudel (*below*) is also a film director: his "I've Loved You So Long" captured the imperceptible degrees by which a woman recovers from a shocking event. Here, a small community comes to terms with occupation and war. Latent trauma bubbles up when an enigmatic stranger, the Anderer, arrives and rattles fragile consciences. The eerie atmosphere evokes another masterly film, Michael Haneke's "The White Ribbon". Much is left to us – who is the Anderer? why are animals lying down and dying? – and good and evil coexist. Even the only foothold we have, Brodeck's testimony, is slippery, as he too is hiding a crime. His first line – "My name is Brodeck and I had nothing to do with it" – seems too eager for exoneration. It draws us into a book that is truthful and brilliant. ~ JAKUB FIGURSKI

CORBIS

Maggie Fergusson *Winter Reading*

Three fine novels, Michael Frayn on his father, and some good old-fashioned history

FICTION **By Nightfall by Michael Cunningham** *(Fourth Estate, hardback, January 20th)*. The author of "The Hours" has hit on an unlikely hero in Peter Harris, a middle-aged New York art dealer in a "happy enough" marriage, troubled by "a deep loneliness, muddled up with some underlayer of jittery fear". It takes a visit from his young, junkie brother-in-law, Mizzy, with whom he briefly falls in love, for Harris's past failures to be borne in on him, and, when Mizzy leaves, his life begins to collapse. Cunningham is psychologically acute, but also clement. At the eleventh hour, he transforms tragedy into a triumph of hope, bringing the novel to a powerfully thought-provoking conclusion.

Snowdrops by A.D. Miller *(Atlantic, hardback, January 1st)*. A snowdrop, in Muscovite slang, is a corpse buried in snow, emerging only in the spring thaw. In a letter to his fiancée, a Luton lawyer describes how, working in Russia over one long winter, he has been seduced into corruption and probably murder. A.D. Miller, *The Economist*'s Britain editor and former Moscow correspondent, has achieved more than a page-turning thriller. He is brilliant at evoking the underbelly of Moscow life – the bitter cold, strip clubs and sleaze, and their fatal attraction for a rootless single man. As the tale unfolds, the narrator is overwhelmed less by guilt than by a longing to return.

How to Read the Air by Dinaw Mengestu *(Cape, hardback, December 30th)*. What happens to your future when your past is too painful to process? Jonas Woldemariam's father has fled war-torn Ethiopia in search of the American dream; but the horror of his escape – crammed inside a chest and forced to drink his own urine – has made him angry and violent. He reacts by exchanging reality for fantasy, and in turn destroys his marriage, and all he holds dear. Mengestu, whose "Children of the Revolution" won prizes both sides of the Atlantic, writes in spare prose that is compassionate but never sentimental. He cares about his characters, and makes you care too.

TRAVEL **To a Mountain in Tibet by Colin Thubron** *(Chatto, hardback, February 1st)*. Thubron, the most private of travel writers, here allows the personal to break cover in his prose for the first time. On a "secular pilgrimage" to the holy mountain Kailas, following his mother's death, he demonstrates his habitual immunity to physical discomfort, but is crippled by grief. As he crosses Nepal into Tibet, memories of his parents, and of his sister's tragic death, home in on him; and the shifting assurances of Buddhism – that reality is illusory, that we shed one life for another – highlight his desolation, and his longing "to touch hands that I know have grown cold". *See Colin Thubron's Seven Wonders, page 122.*

LETTERS **Letters to Monica by Philip Larkin** *(Faber, hardback, out now)*. If you think of Larkin as the Eeyore of post-war poetry, this 40-year run of letters to his lover Monica Jones will be full of surprises. There's no shortage of "yearning discontent", and an irritable desire to be "left ALONE", but the curmudgeonly carapace is constantly pierced by self-mockery, tenderness and passionate enthusiasm – for Beatrix Potter, among others. And whether reflecting on Kingsley Amis ("I can see further than him") or Dickens ("not a real novelist"), on "The Archers" or using a Hoover, Larkin skewers his thoughts to the page with a precision that makes for compulsive reading.

MEMOIRS **Crazy Age: Thoughts on Being Old by Jane Miller** *(Virago, hardback, out now)*. In pretending to reflect on old age, Jane Miller delivers a memoir with a difference. She writes not about what happened to her, the dates and the details, but of what it is to be a sentient being. As she swims her daily lengths in a Chelsea pool and rereads "Anna Karenina" (disconcertingly) in the original Russian, she explores the nature of childhood memory and what it is that her best friend, who has Alzheimer's, has lost. "My mind often feels like an overflowing wastepaper basket," she writes. She sieves its contents with detachment and wonder.

My Father's Fortune by Michael Frayn *(Faber, hardback, out now)*. Frayn cried often while writing this portrait of his father, but the result is the perfect antidote to misery memoir. Tom Frayn, a smart working-class lad who became a successful asbestos salesman, was dealt a series of blows by life – most notably the sudden death of his wife while Michael was still small. He responded to each with such unfaltering courage and generosity that the story of his outwardly ordinary life becomes, cumulatively, extraordinary. His possessions, on death, fitted into a shoebox, but the legacy of everyday heroism celebrated here with wit and bemusement is incalculably rich.

CHILDREN'S **The Story of Britain by Patrick Dillon** *(Walker Books, hardback, out now)*. When so many children like their histories Horrible, it's brave to produce a book like this, full of good, straightforward storytelling, classic, Ladybird-like illustrations and clear timelines. Patrick Dillon, a grown-up historian and father of two, starts with the Norman Conquest and goes all the way to the birth of the internet, 9/11 and global warming. He breaks his narrative into five-minutes-before-lights-out chunks, with a red ribbon to mark your place. His tone is wise and comradely, without being condescending, and his imagination and obvious delight in his subject are hard to resist. This is not just a parent's view: my 12-year-old daughter, "not a brainiac", loved it. ■

FILM

The end? Far from it

Once upon a time, movies would open, close, appear on video, be shown on television, then vanish. Now, with dozens of television channels to fill and rentals going postal, some films never go away. **Ed Cumming** looks at the new afterlife of a movie

FOR ALL ITS themes of inspiration and triumph, "The Shawshank Redemption" was a rather uninspiring and un-triumphant film when it was first released in 1994. Though critically well received, it did terribly at the box office, taking only $18m in America against a budget of $35m. Though nominated for several awards, it won none. This prison drama, starring Tim Robbins and Morgan Freeman, looked as if it would slide quietly into obscurity, like so many movies.

But it didn't. Through word-of-mouth recommendations it gathered momentum after it left the box office, gaining a loyal following on video (VHS) and continuing on to cable television and then DVD when it came along. Now it is ever-present, repeated on channels around the world and still watched in droves (though some might have thought its French title, "Les Evadés" or "The Escapers", rather gives the plot away). Like the gross-out teen comedy "American Pie", or the James Bond films, "Shawshank" has found a tireless audience. In America, channels will air it before a new series, in the hope that its many fans keep watching afterwards. In Britain the story is similar. Steve Jenkins, the BBC's head of acquisitions, says, "When we ask viewers what they value, movies still score highly, usually just behind news."

"Shawshank" was not just a sleeper hit commercially. As its popularity has grown, so has consensus about its quality: it now has an average rating of 9.2 on the movie buff's website IMDb, and tussles with "The Godfather" at the top of lists of the all-time best films. Yet for all its delayed success, "The Shawshank Redemption" was the high-water mark of what might be called the traditional afterlife of a movie. It was released theatrically, given a short rest period, was released on VHS rental, then VHS purchase, then given another rest period, then paid-for television, then repackaged again and sent around the world to reappear for ever more on free-to-air TV. Its releases on each format were meticulously controlled and measured, and it became a television hit on the cusp of the DVD era, when television movies were still a bonding event – an occasion on which many people looked forward to seeing a movie for the first time, and a natural conclusion to a film's life-cycle.

Just 15 years later, the landscape is much altered, and the familiar afterlife of a movie is disintegrating. Families who gather round their television this Christmas will be observing a dying ritual. In Britain, where 23.25m people watched the first television showing of "Jaws" in 1981 – almost as many as watched the news of JFK's assassination – broadcasters are now happy with half that number, even for a blockbuster premiere. Though this is happening all over the world, in Britain it is felt more acutely as there is no tradition of going to the cinema as a family to see a big movie released on Christmas Day, as there is in America. As Sukhdev Sandhu, film critic of the *Daily Telegraph*, puts it: "Cinema in Britain is a figure of speech: TV is the cinema. Most of the movies we watch, we watch on TV. The average Briton goes to the cinema three times a year. We look to the TV to give us our sense of festive community."

In Britain, where there were only three channels until 1982, there are now over 30 on Freeview alone, and America and most countries in Europe have even more. Step into the world of subscription cable or satellite, and that figure goes into the hundreds. There is more television than ever, and viewers have an increasingly bewildering choice of what to watch. The physical rental market has all but evaporated: in September, Blockbuster went bankrupt in America. Under

REX

ILLUSTRATION MICHAEL MORGENSTERN

OLD FAVOURITES

When renting films from websites, viewers are more likely to choose old ones. These are Lovefilm's bestsellers from each of the last ten decades, as at October 2010.

1910s	The Cabinet of Dr Caligan
1920s	Metropolis
1930s	The Wizard of Oz
1940s	Casablanca
1950s	Twelve Angry Men
1960s	The Good, the Bad and the Ugly
1970s	Star Wars Trilogy
1980s	The Terminator
1990s	The Shawshank Redemption
2000s	The Bourne Ultimatum

pressure from internet pirates, production and distribution companies are finding that their traditional post-cinema windows are being squeezed.

Cameron McCracken, the managing director of Pathé UK, produced the most-shown film on the BBC over the past five years, Nick Park's "Chicken Run". He says that where a film used to get four months in the cinema, there is increasing pressure to go down to three, and the DVD window is shrinking too. "The rule of thumb is that 25% of the total revenue is from theatrical release, 50% from DVD rights and 25% from TV. But DVD sales are falling, TV revenues are falling. We're in a difficult transition period. There is a switchover to new forms like on-demand, but they're nowhere near mass mediums yet." The changing mood has brought controversy; this year Disney squabbled with Britain's Odeon cinemas, after insisting that the theatrical release of Tim Burton's 3D animated "Alice in Wonderland" be cut to 13 weeks from 17, to minimise piracy and allow the DVD to appear before the World Cup in South Africa. Odeon eventually crumbled before the might of Mickey Mouse.

It's not bad business for everyone, however. In America the demise of Blockbuster was hastened by the arrival of Netflix, a mail-order subscription DVD service. It is a curiously analogue service in an increasingly digital world – users go online, select films they'd like to watch, and then for a fixed fee (varying on how many movies they want at any given moment) are posted one of their selections. The choice is almost unlimited, and there are none of the late fees. Helen Cowley, the editor of the British equivalent, Lovefilm, says that the flexibility has broadened people's tastes: "70% of our rentals are back-catalogue. People can take more of a risk." She cites "The Last King of Scotland" and "The Hurt Locker" as recent films with average box-office takings which were able to develop great post-theatrical momentum, like "The Shawshank Redemption", but faster. From 13 employees when it began six years ago, Lovefilm now employs 150, and has become the single biggest user of the first-class post, sending out 4.5m DVDs every month.

The speed of change is such that even as they control a lucrative newish market, these companies are already preparing for a DVD-free future. Lovefilm now streams movies from its website, and has begun to offer them direct to the PlayStation 3. These new avenues don't merely increase the opportunities for movies that have already been successful; they offer new possibilities for movies that might otherwise be forgotten. This year Lovefilm used its clout to promote a high-concept horror film, "Frozen", which got a cinematic release where previously it might have gone straight to video. Boundaries are similarly being blurred across media: when the Lovefilm site was promoting the popular Wild West videogame "Red Dead Redemption", it took the opportunity to resuscitate Nick Cave's western noir "The Proposition".

All this innovation may look as if it's changing the afterlife of movies for the better – more choice for the audience, less control for the billion-dollar distributors. But McCracken is more circumspect. "There's still a lot of debate about the reality of the long tail, whether it will be good news for indie films and the like," he says. "It may not exist. If you have a lot of marketing muscle you can get your title up to the front page. The BBC did some research recently which showed that the number of people who get past the front page of iPlayer [its online catch-up service for viewers in Britain] is terrifyingly small." But he says there's still reason to be cheerful. "Either you have a movie people want or you have no value at all," he says. "There's a certain amount of exhilaration in that." The famous motto from "The Shawshank Redemption" may need rewriting for the modern movie. While the cinema can hold it prisoner, the internet can set it free. ■

"Shawshank" has found a tireless audience. In America, channels will air it before a new series, in the hope that its many fans will keep watching

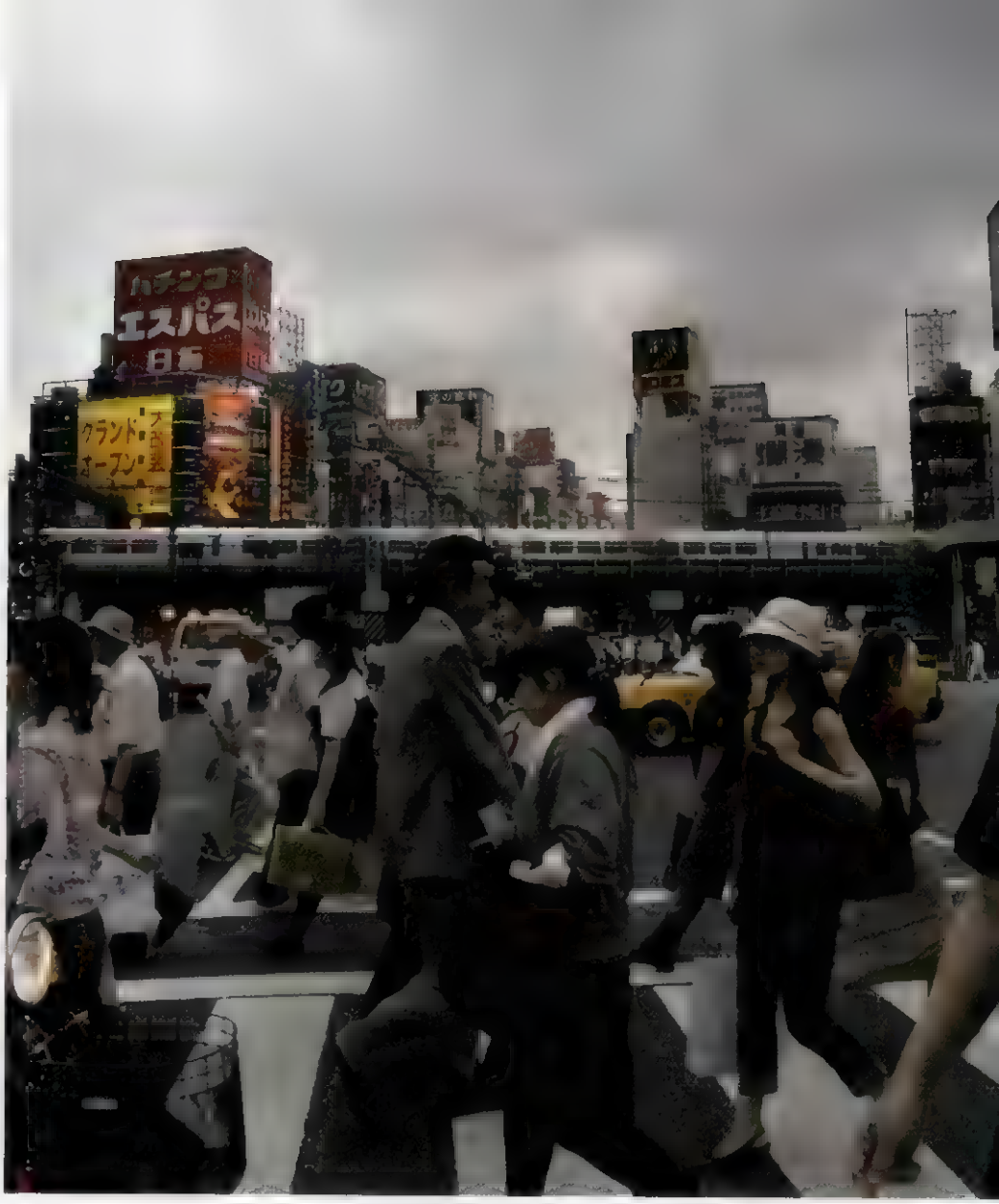
Backward glances

Japan spent more than two centuries shut off from the rest of the world – and it still shows. **Henry Tricks**, who moved to Tokyo last year, finds the Edo period still shimmering just under the surface

It is mid-September, the heat is just leaking out of the end of summer, and Japan is enjoying a rare public holiday. A holiday, that is, in the uniquely Japanese sense of the word, which means the GPS hardwired into every citizen is sending thousands upon thousands to the same fashionable boutiques near my home in Tokyo to shop. It is more crowded than a commuter train at rush hour. Policemen shepherd the multitude along the streets with flashing orange batons. Yet there is something peaceful about the way the Japanese drift together in a crowd; they carry a tiny aura of personal space with them, as bigger than the [illegible] Louis Vuitton handbags, and every bit as precious. They hardly touch, like those shoals of translucent fish that dart from one direction to another without colliding. The policemen use their batons like conductors, keeping everything harmonious. But if you try to defy them, those batons will block your way faster than they can say "Dame dear" – which is about as final as "Not on your life."

Such are the means by which order and harmony are maintained in Japan. There is a deep-rooted

Anti-fashion
Street style in Tokyo: designer glasses and a surgical mask



> respect for others, so ingrained that ground staff at Narita airport bow to departing planes as they taxi to the runway. And there is a subtle coercion, like an invisible hand on society's collar, based on centuries of ancestor worship that has made many customs immutable. The attitudes have been shaped partly by the physical landscape of Japan, which packs one of the most crowded populations on earth onto narrow plains, bounded by sea and inhospitable mountains. For centuries the main activity has been rice farming, which requires communal planting, weeding, watering and harvesting, rather than the rugged individualism of American and European agriculture.

I have been mesmerised by life here since I arrived a year ago, floating on a wave of adoration of most things Japanese, yet getting in everyone's way and doing everything wrong. I would jog around the Imperial Palace in a clockwise direction, only to find everyone else running anti-clockwise, bearing down on me as if I didn't exist. I wore short sleeves in early autumn, and couldn't work out why, when it was still blazing hot outside, everyone had put on their jackets and ties again. After swimming with dolphins on the island of Mikurajima this summer, my family and I went to a café to have lunch, still in our damp bathing costumes. Our hostess was so livid that at first I thought we must have set the place alight, not left a few damp seats where our bottoms had been. Living as a foreigner in Japan, for all its attractions, has many such small humiliations. You may be on a noble quest to plumb the depths of the Japanese soul, but you will take so many wrong turns you end up wondering whether you are indeed too brutish to make sense of it.

You may also be struck by how few of the locals have a matching interest in you and your culture. That is because it increasingly seems as if the outside world – with its sharper elbows, fattier food and shoddy dress sense – is kept at arm's length. Fewer young Japanese are travelling abroad, fewer are studying English (this year, the main English-language school went bust), and fewer are taking places at leading academic institutions overseas such as Harvard Business School. Bosses at Japan's legendary export businesses complain they cannot find youngsters who are prepared to work abroad. Two clever young Japanese friends, just posted to excellent jobs in America, told me that Japan is so comfortable they find it hard to leave.

Yet as those friends are the first to admit, it is a cotton-wool comfort that keeps out alien germs – like the surgical facemasks that many Japanese wear, so at odds with the rest of their perfect attire. To the outsider, it can lend the society an air of feeble vulnerability. At times it is downright maddening. Foreign ATM cards don't work in most Japanese banks, Japanese movies – even the classics – rented at the ubiquitous Tsutaya video store don't offer the option of foreign-language subtitles. Japanese mobile-phone technology is so idiosyncratic that analysts talk of "the Galapagos effect", because it has grown up in a unique eco-system that makes it unsuitable for use anywhere else.

Japan is so safe that my children can walk to school alone, and if I lose my wallet someone will give it back

At times it feels as if the outside world does not exist. That can be liberating for an affluent expatriate – outsiders are not held to the same standards of conduct as their Japanese counterparts. Japan is so safe that my children can walk to school alone, and if I lose my wallet I know someone will find it and give it back. Life can be chillingly harsh, though, at the bottom of the social pile. Many Chinese immigrants, known euphemistically as interns, toil in sweatshop conditions in factories. Some have died through overwork. Illegal immigrants, including those with Japanese families, are regularly locked up in jail and deported.

It is a depressing trend, because Japan has so much to offer the rest of us. Just think of the Sony Walkman, the Honda motorbike, the Toyota Prius, the Pot Noodle, the Nintendo DS and Shiseido cosmetics, and

CONTRASTO/EYEVINE MAGNUM GETTY

you have a range of products that have made modern life more fun, more convenient or more sustainable. And what about the Japanese goods and services that rarely see the light of day abroad? Onigiri, the savoury rice balls, would sweep the over-stuffed sandwich off the shelves if they could only travel West. Then there are heated loo seats, caterpillar-like trolleys that move heavy goods up and down stairs, vending machines that never break – and so never need kicking – and "relax rooms" like those in my office building, where you can sleep off lunch in reclining chairs.

THE COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP that Japan has with the rest of the world is one of its most intriguing aspects. And it comes and goes like climate change through Japanese history, running just close enough to the surface to be traceable – even in this modern era of high-rise apartment buildings, interminable power pylons and throbbing neon *pachinko* signs.

The early indications date back more than a millennium, to before the tenth century, when Chinese writing swept into Japan, books and poetry emerged and an exquisite court life took root in the new capital of modern-day Kyoto. Days were spent in endless garden parties, composition of delicate verses, and gentle flirting – as exemplified in "The Tale of Genji", the world's first novel (written by a delightfully saucy female courtier, Murasaki Sikibu). Not long afterwards Japan turned its back on China, and then (to the vexation of anyone learning Japanese since) it added the *kana* script to Chinese *kanji*. This was because women, who were less educated and not allowed to read Chinese, developed their own cursive script.

In the 13th century, the Mongol army swept down into Japan, to be repelled not only by Japanese troops, but also by fierce storms. These were put down to the *kamikaze*, or divine wind – a reflection of the deep-seated belief that Japan was a land of the gods, and so protected by them. The pilots of the second world war were named after it.

But it is the Edo era, the peculiar two-and-a-half-century time capsule from 1603 to 1868, that casts the longest shadow. It was the time when a newly unified Japan turned its back on the outside world, shut its borders to almost all foreigners, stopped its people travelling abroad and forbade Japanese émigrés from returning to the country on pain of death. Each person was given his exact rank in society – in descending order: samurai, farmer, craftsman, merchant and outsider – and Japan went for 265 years without wars or revolutions. Much of this era is known as the *sakoku jidae* or "closed-country period", and it was centred on Edo, now Tokyo, while the emperor was cloistered in Kyoto. At first glance, it seems like the epitome of the dark ages – a medieval equivalent of North Korea or Pol Pot's Cambodia, ruled by an all-powerful family of shoguns, or military dictators, named Tokugawa. They handed on power for 14 generations, and kept the citizens in line through a byzantine network of spies and informants. The execution grounds can still be visited in Tokyo. Ordinary criminals might be crucified, boiled, burned or chopped in half: only the lucky samurai got to disembowel themselves.

Orderly conduct
ABOVE Saying hello in Osaka
TOP Going upstairs to bed
OPPOSITE Crossing the street in Tokyo

The gore, of course, has gone, but it seems to me that something of the Edo era shimmers just below the surface of modern Japan. I first discovered it by accident, when I visited the small market town of Sekigahara where the civil-war battle that ushered in the Edo era was fought in 1600. A signboard marking the victory spot shows the bulbous, lordly-looking Ieyasu Tokugawa surveying the severed heads of the warlords he has defeated. The nearby museum turns out to be a magnet for pretty young women, who come here hankering after the manly virtues espoused by Tokugawa and his men – women in particular seem to love the warlord video games in which he features. One told me he had the guts and sense of purpose that Japanese boys lack – not to mention his extravagant outfits. She may have a point. Some young Japanese men dress up in women's clothes and pee sitting down – as the >

> mayor of Tokyo has disparagingly put it. Most dress for work in monotone grey suits: Japanese women call it "rat's colour". Few of them wish to travel abroad, speak English or eat Western food, as the women do. Sadly, their salaries are so low many have a tough time attracting women, anyway – one of the main reasons for Japan's low birth rate.

In Tokyo, the seamier side of Edo-era Japan still exerts a shadowy presence over the city's barely cloistered sex industry. At the entrance to the Yoshiwara "pleasure district" in northern Tokyo, an official plaque on a willow tree next to a petrol station explains it is the "Looking-Back Tree" of Edo-era antiquity, from which visitors would cast yearning glances back at the courtesans left behind "feeling a painful reluctance to leave". (It goes on to note, with scrupulous respect for historical authenticity, that the tree has actually been transplanted from its original site because of "road construction and re-zoning".)

Where once *ukiyo-e* artists painted prostitutes in bamboo cages, now there are bathhouses (they used to be called Turkish baths until the Turkish embassy complained). Patrons can be soaped – and more – at what look to my untrained eye like reasonable hourly rates posted on the door.

The doormen are smartly dressed – no flouncy-haired *yakuza* bouncers as in seedier red-light districts closer to the city centre. When a friend and I approached one for an interview, he was only too happy to talk on condition that we mentioned his name. It was important, Takashima-san said, to explain the district's brothel culture, because it was an integral part of Japanese tradition. Many Japanese men, he patiently explained, do not have sex at home, so they need a safe alternative. Only Japanese women work as prostitutes, he said, because only they understand the rules of the game. They employ all the virtues of Japan's uniquely attentive service culture. Police chiefs, politicians and senior civil servants have all passed his doorway, he said. They too believe in the value of keeping the flame of tradition alive. Would we like to see for ourselves? No, thanks; our interest was purely journalistic.

An attempt at restoring the lustre of this extraordinary period in Japanese history has been made recently by a descendant of the Tokugawa line, Tunenari, the 18th head of the family. He is an engaging man in his 70s who appears to have tried to make up for the insularity of his ancestors by travelling widely throughout his life. This year, he published a book in English, "The Edo Inheritance", which is an unashamedly revisionist view of the Tokugawa era. In it he argues that, while the rest of the world was undergoing a febrile time of sea exploration, religious wars and revolutions, Edo was a merry place of peace and social stability. Although the doors were closed to the outside world, the end of the civil wars that had racked Japan through the Middle Ages brought an enormous peace dividend – a little like the surge that followed the second world war. The population tripled from 12m to 30m in 100 years, and Edo became the largest city in the world – three times the size of London at the time. Yet the rivers were so clean, they provided fresh fish for the city's bars. Meanwhile, in London, bed pans were being thrown into the streets, and at the palace of Versailles there were hardly loos, let alone places to wash.

End of an era
Yoshinobu Tokugawa, the 15th and last shogun of the Edo period

Many Japanese men, the doorman patiently explained, do not have sex at home, so they need a safe alternative

After the first century of the Edo era, population growth slowed dramatically as Japan ran up against the problem of having to feed itself, but order and peace were maintained. Even the great Tenmei famine of 1782-88, a result of volcanic eruptions, harsh winters and poor crops, did not trigger a rebellion.

Tokugawa's favourite ancestor is the eighth shogun, Yoshimune, who ruled around this time and decided to set a frugal example. He refused to wear silk, ate so humbly that his Korean neighbours dismissed him as a peasant, and promoted a sort of cultural greenery in which people moved from the pursuit of wealth to admiring cherry blossoms and peach trees. He encouraged the composition of 17-syllable sardonic snapshots of life, known as *senryu*, which expressed everyday views like, "What a pain he is, now that he has stopped drinking."

A witness from that time lends support to Tokugawa's argument. Englebert Kaempfer, a German physician, was one of the few foreigners allowed into the country and wrote a book about the Japanese that was read avidly by Europeans desperate to trade with the cloistered Edo. "United and peaceable, taught to give due worship to the Gods, due obedience to the Laws, due submission to their Superiors, due love and regard to their Neighbours, civil, obliging, virtuous..." Japan, he said, "was never in a happier position than it now is, governed by an arbitrary monarch, shut up and kept from all Commerce and Communication with foreign nations."

His view didn't last, either in Japan – where Edo has been seen as a shameful period of history – or abroad. This year a marvellously intricate novel, "The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet" by David Mitchell, depicted the trials of a Dutch shipping clerk posted in 1799 to the tiny colony of Dejima – the only place European traders were allowed to live – "200 paces long by 80 deep", severed from the mainland by

CORBIS GETTY

Warm-hearted woman
A 1959 photograph of a skin diver, or *ama-san*, from Onjuku

a canal and joined to Nagasaki only by a small bridge. There was such a thirst for knowledge of the outside world that Japanese people would travel to Nagasaki just to talk to the elite few (and the courtesans) who were allowed to speak to the Dutch traders. For many, Edo was claustrophobic.

What makes the current Tokugawa's rose-tinted view of the past important, even disturbing, is that it may help fuel an emerging attitude in modern Japan – that it somehow took a wrong turn when it attempted to engage with the world, at first on its own militaristic terms, and then via industrial conquest.

YET MY TRAVELS in Japan continue to throw up glimpses of Edo that offer a more refreshing perspective on the era. This summer, my family spent much of our time staying in a largely overlooked part of the country less than two hours by car from our home in Tokyo. The land starts off drearily ordinary, but the farther south you travel, the more timeless and intriguing it becomes. You see one-wagon trains winding slowly through the valleys, and smoke from the rice stubble wafting up into the trees. The farmers are old and barely go out after dark; if you are lost, there is little point asking for directions, as many of them rarely venture beyond their hamlets.

Buried in those overgrown hills are old stories that modern Japan is in danger of forgetting. One of them marks the arrival of some of the first foreigners to Japan's shores. It dates back to 1609 – the dawn of the Edo era – and took place in a cove hidden in a wilderness of woods, far from the madding crowd. The woods run up to sandstone cliffs which jut out over the Pacific, near the seaside town of Onjuku.

These cliffs, still pockmarked with dug-outs for gun emplacements from the war, were thrown up when an oceanic upheaval millions of years ago tore Japan out of the sea, leaving a trench as deep as Everest. Out of those bottomless seas a Spanish galleon, the *San Francisco*, was flung in a storm en route from the Philippines to Mexico. It was smashed on the Onjuku rocks, killing 56 people, but 317 survivors – many of them Mexican – made it to the hidden cove where they huddled, shivering with cold and fear.

As they fingered their rosaries, they would have known how much danger they were in. Twelve years earlier, 26 Christian martyrs had been crucified on a hill in Nagasaki (one, Felipe de Jesus, would become Mexico's first saint). And the people of Onjuku, ingrained with a deep suspicion of outsiders, may well never have seen foreigners. It was lucky for the shipwrecked sailors that the women of Onjuku made their living diving (bare-breasted) for abalone, oysters, lobsters and seaweed in that cove. When they came across the sailors, the divers, or *ama-san*, are said to have warmed them with the heat of their own bodies.

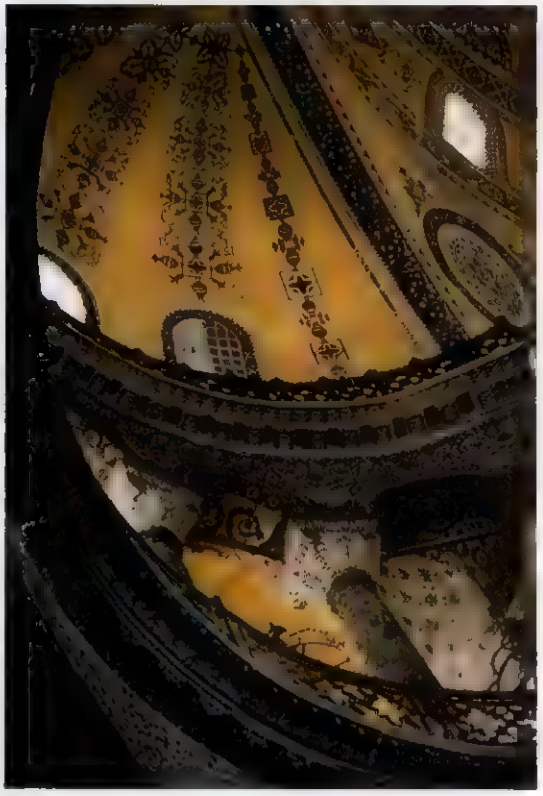
I have met 80- and 90-year-old descendants of those warm-hearted women. I first saw them at a wedding in Onjuku this year of a Mexican man and his Japanese wife – they loved the symbolism of the wedding, four centuries on. There are pictures of these same *ama-san* taken by the local sake brewer in the 1950s and 1960s. They smile deliciously at his camera, breasts naked in the sun, muscles rippling in their shoulders and legs as they carry armfuls of lobster and seaweed, or haul up their boats. The pictures are kept in the sake brewery, like treasures.

The main beam holding up the brewery's thatched roof is part of the 400-year-old mast of the shipwrecked galleon. The outside world infiltrates Japan, however hard it tries to look the other way. And it is the warmth of people like those *ama-san* that keeps outsiders like me yearning to dive in deeper. ■

SEVEN WONDERS

Colin Thubron

Best known for his travel writing, which tends to look east for its subjects (Russia, China, the Silk Road), Colin Thubron is also an award-winning writer of fiction and president of the Royal Society of Literature. Here he sheds light on the seven wonders of his well-travelled world



BUILDING **HAGIA SOPHIA, ISTANBUL**

To me this is the peak of Byzantine architecture. As you approach you see a not very promising-looking building with fat minarets. Then you go in and it's absolutely staggering – a vast, now-empty space with galleries leading into nowhere and that extraordinarily shallow dome. St Peter's in Rome is twice as high, but they're almost the same diameter, so it gives a feeling of floating. It's typically Byzantine: all the beauty is internal. There are a few magnificent 14th-century mosaics; a wonderful Christ with the Virgin and the Baptist, tremendously well preserved. You can imagine the building clothed like that, the mosaics canted in the same way, the candles underneath and shafts of light coming in...there's a great feeling of consecrated space, like a huge forest clearing.

HOTEL **THE RENMIN, CHONGQING, CHINA**

I've opted for the Renmin in Chongqing, in the province of Sichuan, because it was fascinatingly awful. Chongqing is a grim but interesting industrial city built on a precipitous peninsula sticking into the Yangzi, and the Renmin was – as a reflection of it – the perfect place to stay. It is a colossal, ochre-and-green, pseudo-Ming palace, built in 1953 at a time of Soviet-Chinese accord (and thus pure Stalinist). Behind the fantastical façade, the accommodation when I visited was terrible, and I gather it hasn't much changed. Twenty-five years ago I remember rats trapeze-ing across the bathroom washing-lines. I shared my dormitory with them, and three sick Japanese students.

BEACH **OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK, WASHINGTON STATE**

The beach I've chosen is for walking along rather than lying on. It's magnificent, about 80 miles of beach around a peninsula, and virtually deserted. If you go inland there's a wonderful forest with elk and a kind of marmot only found here. The trees go right up to the beach and indeed inhabit it because the beach is full of enormous chunks of driftwood, piled up. The sand is beautiful and there are lovely black rocks sticking out, covered in brilliantly coloured mussels. Occasionally you see a face in the sea, and it's a Steller sea lion looking at you.

WORK OF ART BUDDHA, KYOTO, JAPAN

I've chosen a gorgeous 7th-century wooden Buddha, which is in the Koryuji temple, the oldest in Kyoto. This is a strange, delicate, "listening" figure, a little under life-size. It is probably Korean – the Japanese and Koreans were wonderful wood carvers. I imagine the statue was once painted, but now you can see the grain of the red pinewood. He probably represents the Maitreya, the Buddha of the Future, who contemplates the world's salvation. Rodin's "Thinker" was a variant on the same theme, the contemplative figure in art, which is ancient in Far Eastern culture. To my mind this is the most beautiful version of it.

JOURNEY THE SOUTHERN SILK ROAD, CHINA

The Taklamakan in north-west China is sometimes called the most dangerous desert on earth – its name means "you go in but you never come out". You skirt it either to the north or south: the north is the regular Silk Road that is rather developed now, but the south is almost untravelled – strange and empty and rather lovely. The journey, from Dunhuang to Kashgar if you go with the silk, is some 1,500 miles. This route was flourishing 2,000 years ago, but over time the sands have shifted and its cities are now stranded about 40 miles into the desert from the modern track. Here and there you can travel in to glimpse their ruins. From Hotan (below), you can go many miles by camel to the Buddhist stupa at Rawak.

VIEW MY GARDEN, LONDON

A little bit narcissistically I have chosen the view from the back of my house. It is in part a self-made view, since the garden was a desert when I arrived four years ago. The putti were already in place, however: part of an Italian series representing the arts, I think (I seem to have painting and music). At the end of the garden is the Victorian church of St John the Baptist, which has been partially given over to the Eritrean community, so occasionally you hear Coptic singing, very faintly. I love the dense layers of green and the fact you're completely private. I'm often asked which country I'd like to live in, but I've always felt I belong in a garden in England.

REX A; AMY A. RORA REUTERS

CITY SAMARKAND, UZBEKISTAN

On the face of it Samarkand is not beautiful. It's a Soviet-built city in many parts, with dour, functional architecture, but you find some magical historical monuments. Its apogee was in the time of Tamerlane, who died in 1405, and it was the capital of the world for a good 35 years. He was an uneducated monster, but passionate about the city. He brought back the craftsmen he captured, whether Indian silversmiths or Persian mosaicists, and shoved them into Samarkand to work. The surviving monuments – there aren't many of them – are extraordinary. There's the lovely vale of tombs which is almost like a lexicon of Islamic architectural motifs of the time, with the most beautiful tile work.

Colin Thubron was talking to Rebecca Wills. His next book, "To a Mountain in Tibet" (Chatto) will be published on February 3rd

BEING THERE

New York

Even when you live there, Updike said, it still glitters from afar. **Tom Shone** on real life in a city that has aspiration built into its very architecture

"You get your money's worth with the seasons"
ABOVE Snow in Central Park
RIGHT A summer evening on 42nd Street

THERE IS NOTHING quite like the heat of your first summer in New York. The asphalt feels spongy underfoot. The avenues shimmer in the haze. The Union Jack handkerchief your mother insisted you pack – whoever heard of a hankie in New York! – proves no match for the sweat pooling in your eyebrows and running between your shoulder-blades. As you hop from one cloud of air conditioning to the next, peeling the shirt from your back, you feel like an animal that has chosen the wrong element in which to exist: a frog in flight, a bird underwater, an Englishman abroad. Your Union Jack hankie will double nicely as a flag of surrender.

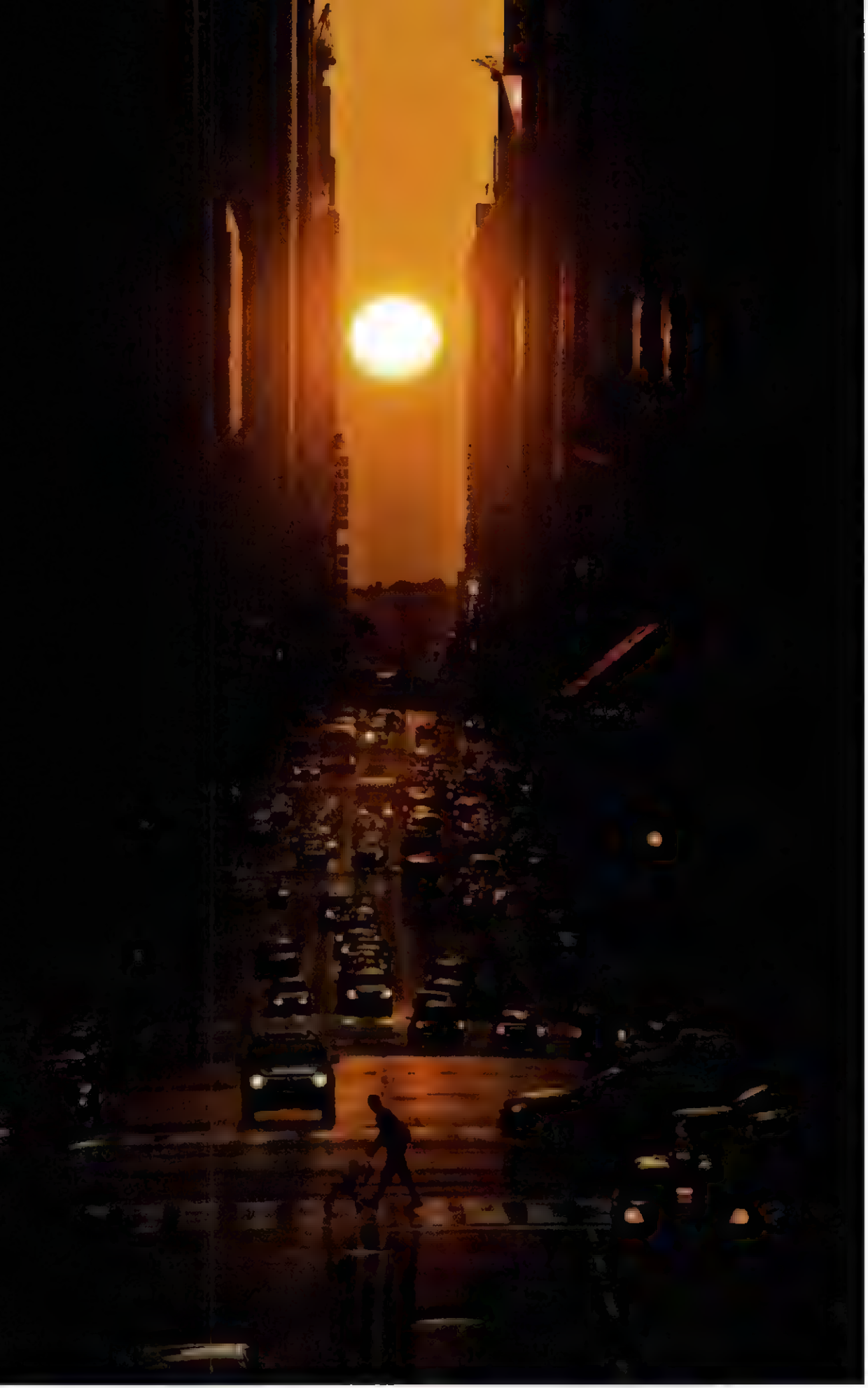
Now it's one of the things I most love about life in New York – along with the arctic winters, during which the city seems almost to travel back in time, the cars and roads disappearing beneath an even white blanket until there is little in your line of sight that would look out of place in a daguerreotype. You get your money's worth with the seasons in New York. So unlike London with its single grey mono-season, interrupted by a few days of sun and a few more days of rain.

I arrived in New York in the summer of 1999 and spent most of my first year hanging out with other Brits at expat enclaves like Tea & Sympathy on Greenwich Avenue, or Soho House in the Meat-packing District, huddling around tables where the conversation inevitably tilted, after a certain number of drinks, to the same subset of unanswerable questions. How long are you here for? When are you going back? Are you here for good, do you think? New York inspires a lot of fear in its newly arrived immigrants – fear that the city is going to eat you up, that you're not going to make it, that you'll be thrown out again, not even making the grade as a member of the poor, huddled masses. "If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere," sang Sinatra, but most newcomers to the city inevitably notice the flipside to that, sooner or later: if you fail out here, you can't exactly say you were hanging out for the mountain views.

"The only city on earth that glitters from afar when you are in it," said Updike, or something like that, and it's true: stand on any street corner and gaze down the avenues, each block milkier than the last, and you will find yourself looking at more places you are not, or could be, or should be, than any other city in the world. Want – or aspiration, or ambition – is built into the very architecture of the place. Even the car horns sound a note of muscular self-furtherance. In London a parp on the horn registers the inquiry: "Are you mad?" In Paris, together with a shrug heavenward, it sounds a more philosophical note: "The whole world is mad." In New York, it is more primal, self-expressive. "I'm mad! Get out of my way!"

It is a hard city in many ways. Particularly for Europeans, which is to say Officially Designated Softies, the absent cradle of the welfare state can resemble driving without shock absorbers: you feel every bump in the road. It's what lends the city its vertiginous late-capitalist thrill. You can make money faster here than anywhere else, and lose money faster. Everything is accelerated. It's like living in the middle of the world's biggest department store – 1,001 ways to part with your cash on every corner. There's a reason nobody saves money here. >

XINHUA/EYEVINE . LONELY PLANET



Going native

WHERE TO STAY

Of the designer boutique hotels, The **Ace Hotel** (20 West 29th St; +1 212 679 2222), a 12-storey hotel in the heart of Midtown, has rooms with turntables and vintage records

The **Gershwin Hotel** (7 East 27th St; +1 212 545 8000) is Warhol-ishly camp, and next door to the Museum of Sex.

For more intimacy than a hotel, try the **Abingdon Guest House** (21 Eighth Ave; +1 212 243 5384), superbly located in the leafy West village, with access to some great shops

WHAT TO EAT

My favourite coffee in the city is to be had at **Jack's** (138 West 10th St; +1 212 929 0821), a tiny brick-lined coffee shop that has live music most Tuesday nights. For brunch I like the **Blue Ribbon Bakery** (34 Downing St; +1 212 691 0404), which has the kind of inventive, reasonably priced menu (sturgeon! oxtail!) Manhattan does so well; also **Pastis** (9 9th Ave; +1 212 929 4844) and **Freeman's** (191 Chrystie St; +1 212 420 0012). For dinner, try **Salt** (58 MacDougal St; +1 212 674 4968) and, in Brooklyn, **Seersucker** (329 Smith St; +1 718 422 0444). For fast food, not supersized, try **Shake Shack** on the south-east corner of Madison Square Park at 23rd & Madison (+1 212 889 6600).

STREETWISE

Stick your hand up for a cab and keep it raised, but don't rely on them from 4 to 6pm: they're off-duty. Taking the subway, you need to check the direction of the train before going down into the station. Most of Manhattan is safe after-hours, but stay away from parks at night. Americans tip more generously than most: 20% preserves national honour. Pedestrian traffic in New York is like real traffic anywhere else: >

> watch your lane, indicate, no sudden stops.

WHAT TO SEE

A visit to the **Tenement Museum** (97 Orchard St; +1 212 431 0233), an immaculately preserved tenement of the kind that used to house a family of 12 Prussians plus their sewing machines, is a good introduction to the warp and weft of the immigrant experience.

New arrivals should also take a boat trip around the island – **Circle Line Cruises** (Pier 83, West 42nd St; +1 212 563 3200) offers everything from a 75-minute hop around the Statue of Liberty to a three-hour tour of all five boroughs.

For an even longer perspective, the **Hayden Planetarium** (Central Park West & West 81st St; +1 212 769 5100), has tours of Life, The Universe and Everything narrated by Tom Hanks, Harrison Ford and Whoopi Goldberg.

For intimate rock concerts by distinctive acts, check the lists at the **Bowery Ballroom** (6 Delancey St; +1 212 533 2111) or **Webster Hall** (125 East 11th St; +1 212 353 1600). Patti Smith is at the Ballroom after Christmas

Recommended indie cinemas are the **Angelika** (18 West Houston St at Mercer; +1 212 995 2000) and the **Sunshine** (143 East Houston St; +1 212 330 8182).

SHOPPING

Elegant homewares hang out at **John Derian** (10 East 2nd St; +1 212 677 8408) and **Jonathan Adler** (37 Greenwich Ave; +1 212 488 2803).

The **Strand Bookstore** (828 Broadway; +1 212 473 1452) has 18 miles of second-hand books, all clearly categorised and alphabetised. ~ TS

> Naturally, you spend a fair amount of time monitoring yourself for signs of immigrant gumption – or, failing that, the good old-fashioned New York temper. If the city instils fear in its new arrivals, those who stick around soon learn to process that fear into anger. There's a lot to get angry about. The rents. Your upstairs neighbours' refusal to remove their shoes. The ignorance of your average cabbie, even with numbered streets. Cyclists. Immigration attorneys. That woman who just stopped on the street in front of you. Just stopped dead, as if it were her living room!

The bureaucracy faced by newcomers is positively Russian in its scope. At one point during my first month, attempting to set up the bank account that would allow me to pay rent on the property I needed to occupy in order to receive the social-security card I would need to set up a bank account, I realised that the only way it was going to work was if the whole lot just magicked itself into existence at the exact same time.

What New Yorkers traditionally do, upon reaching boiling point, is get out of the city altogether, making the long haul up to the Hamptons to enjoy a day or two of unnervingly perfect sandy beaches before enduring the gruelling three-hour crawl through fuming traffic to get back again, by which time they have generally ingested enough carbon monoxide to cancel out whatever dim therapeutic value the trip might have promised in the first place. Occasionally, too, you hear rumours of a more distant place – a land of strip malls and polygamist cults, ravaged by hurricanes and

New York feels as if it's on loan to its inhabitants. We are all passing through

populated entirely by Republicans, televangelists and spree killers – otherwise known as "America". But the general thinking seems to be that while this unpleasant addition to the otherwise fine island of Manhattan may have been necessary at some point in the nation's history, these days it is best avoided if at all possible.

Alternatively you can move to Brooklyn, a veritable Arcadia of trees, brownstones, newlyweds, terrific bands and strollers. I moved here a few years ago and was amazed at my first sighting of babies. I'd almost forgotten about them. They have to hang out somewhere, and the place they generally hang out is Brooklyn, thus leaving Manhattan free to maintain its reputation as a twenty-something Lotusland. When I told my wife I was writing an account of my bustling metropolitan life in Brooklyn Heights, she responded, with genuine curiosity, "So what will you do? Make it up?"

It's true, I no longer enjoy those crazy side-winding nights which begin in a loft in Williamsburg and end in a cab-ride through SoHo in the bluish dawnlight wearing someone else's shirt. I pride myself on

CONTRASTOFFANI

Reflected glory
A glimpse of Manhattan and the Brooklyn Bridge from a train at Hewes Street Station, Brooklyn

having seen through the myth of the Perfect New York Life, imbibed from countless commercials and TV programmes, and no longer beat myself up that I'm not sailing down the Hudson with a bevy of my Gap-clad friends, cocktail in one hand, Knicks tickets in the other, enjoying an Everyone-in-Khakis moment.

After ten years in the city, I have never been to a Knicks game, although I have been to the US Open tennis. None of my friends wears khaki. I do not take cabs so much any more, but ride the subway and love the overhead stretch of line this side of the river, sunlight strobing through the steel fretwork of the Manhattan Bridge, the spires of the financial district, without the two front teeth of the twin towers, silhouetted by the setting sun. That never gets old.

Do I consider myself a New Yorker? I use the American pronunciation of "water", "tomato", and "asshole" now, solely in the interests of being understood. Watching old movies, I find myself fascinated by the extras – the walk-ons, the crowds milling around, acting as if they owned the place. Much more than London, New York feels as if it's on a short loan to its current inhabitants. We are all passing through.

The other week, a friend came to visit from London on a work trip that left him with a few spare days. New York is a good place to play host. You feel all proud and bigged up as you walk around the city, pointing out this place or that. Your reservations about the place vanish in an instant. Living in New York is a bit like how I imagine it must feel to be married to someone like Cher. Yes, the endless costume changes can wear you down, and "I Got You Babe" may lose some of its charm when sung in the shower for the nth time, but try complaining to a friend and you will lose them at "costume". You're married to Cher, for heaven's sake! Snap out of it!

We caught a cab uptown and walked around Central Park, licking ice-creams. Even though the temperature was in the 90s, I found myself grateful for the dryness of the heat. My friend wanted to visit the Guggenheim, so we pointed him there and hooked up again in the evening. Walking through the Village, I found myself showing off. "That used to be an Italian restaurant," I said. "They made great meatballs," although as soon as I said it, I realised that before it was an Italian restaurant it had been a Korean restaurant, too. I had witnessed two iterations, not because I had been there so long but because the turnover of businesses in Manhattan is so fast. Far from making me feel like I had this city down, it reminded me of the exact opposite: I could still go the way of those meatballs. I made a small sign of the cross, and moved on. ■

Visitors' books

What could be more satisfying than a hotel with its own library? Claire Wrathall catalogues five

The rise of the Kindle and its rivals may mean that many people can travel with a virtual library of their own, but fortunately for lovers of ink on paper there are some hotels which offer guests access to carefully curated collections of actual, tactile books – and also provide convivial spaces in which to read them.

The Ambassade, Amsterdam
Thanks to the ties it has forged with the Dutch publishing industry, this independent 59-room hotel – fashioned from ten 17th-century merchants' houses on a canal – has long been the lodging of choice for visiting authors, many of whom have donated signed editions of their own work to its library. Established in 1987, it now runs to more than 1,800 books by writers from 76 countries and is housed in an elegant antique-filled room just past the reception area. *Doubles from €195, room only. www.ambassade-hotel.nl*

Carlisle Bay, Antigua
When Gordon Campbell Gray opened his Caribbean resort in 2003, he solicited lists of "top 10 beach reads" from friends and travel editors, a group, it turned out, with intriguing tastes (who reckoned on Goethe and Lermontov as holiday reading?). Principal credit for the eclectic mix is due to Philip Blackwell, of the bookselling dynasty, who compiled the 1,200-volume library which fills a strikingly modern, fully air-conditioned building in the gardens. *Doubles from $380, room only. www.campbellgrayhotels.com*

The Library Hotel, New York
The Dewey Decimal System may seem an unlikely concept for a hotel, but that's how this friendly 60-room Midtown boutique classifies its ten floors – hence the six-digit room numbers. Each floor is themed, like the sections in a bookshop. If you don't find anything to read in the 25-100 titles in each room – more of a challenge if you're in 600.003 (management theory), than, say, 800.001 (erotic literature, where you'll find Casanova's "Histoire de ma vie" by the bed) – look in the lobby which has 6,000-odd titles. Readings are held on the 14th-floor terrace. *Doubles from $255, b&b. www.libraryhotel.com*

Le Pavillon des Lettres, Paris
A sister to the Pavillon de la Reine (perhaps the loveliest hotel in Paris), this new boutique hotel off the rue Faubourg St Honoré has named each of its 26 rooms after a writer – an alphabet of authors from Hans Christian Andersen and Baudelaire to Xenophon, Yeats and Zola. Each room has an iPad loaded not only with the guest directory, which you can use to order room service, but also daily newspapers, a selection of music and the oeuvre of the author in question. *Doubles from €300, room only. www.pavillondeslettres.com*

The Commune by the Great Wall, near Beijing
Just over an hour's drive from Beijing, on a mountainous estate by the Great Wall, stands this architecturally stupendous hotel, a cluster of villas designed by 12 leading Asian architects. The Poplar Kids' Republic Picture Bookshop, more a shop than a library, has titles in English, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, and hosts storytelling sessions and "happy reading hours" so that parents can go and walk the "wild" (unrestored) wall – quite tough going – unhindered by their offspring. *Doubles from 2,700 yuan, b&b. www.communebythegreatwall.com*

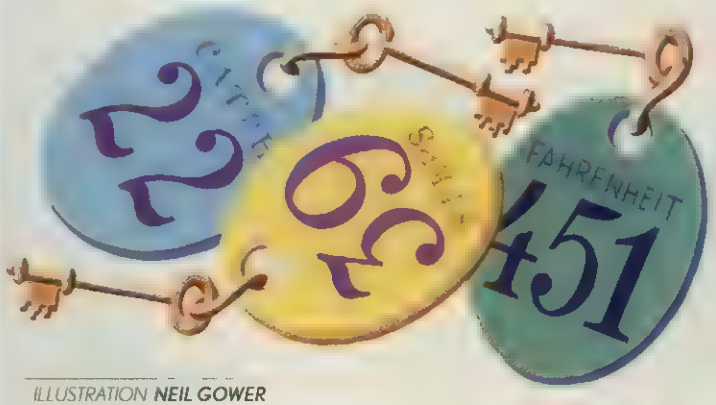


ILLUSTRATION **NEIL GOWER**

SNAPSHOT

Pamir Mountains
Afghanistan

This picture puts the weekly supermarket shop into perspective: the supplies the yaks are carrying through a high Himalayan pass must last for an entire winter. They will ensure the survival of a group of about 800 Kyrgyz people, whose ancestors settled about 150 years ago on an inhospitable, inhumanly high plateau in Afghanistan. The average height is 4,300 metres above sea level, and nothing grows but grass.

During the summer months, before the white curtain of winter descends and cuts them off completely, they cross the border into Pakistan and go down into the valleys to barter some of their yaks – their most valuable possessions. In exchange they get basic goods such as flour, matches and wood from the local Wakhi people. Yaks are hardy animals, weighing up to 800 kilos and ready to dig under the snow with their hooves to reach the grass. But even they may have nosebleeds as they cross the 4,930-metre pass; horses making the journey have been known to die of altitude sickness. The three-to-five-day trek is particularly testing, with several hazardous river crossings, but all aspects of life are harsh on a barely habitable plateau almost half the height of Everest. It's tough at the top of the world.

The French photographer Matthieu Paley has made seven journeys to the area. To take pictures such as this one, he had to show a yak-like determination. "You can't just arrive and go straight up to the pass," he says. "You have to spend quite a time in the valleys lower down to acclimatise." And it turns out that yaks can move faster than you might expect. "The difficulty is keeping up with the caravan while carrying a heavy backpack and stopping to take photos." – REBECCA WILLIS

PHOTOGRAPH **MATTHIEU PALEY**

Jungle beat

How to irritate a great ape, by **Will Smith**

IT'S ALWAYS INTERESTING to discover a new phobia. Mine is gorillas. Specifically, gorillas that have taken a dislike to me. I'm being photographed at the end of a day's zookeeping at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in Jersey. Sharing the frame with me is Ya Kwanza, a silverback western lowland gorilla. No matter that he is on the other side of 42mm of bullet-proof glass – I am spooked. The photographer urges me to bring my face closer to Ya Kwanza's enormous head, but it's a trade-off; the closer I get, the more I shake. I feel like an egg facing a cannonball.

Once in position, I find it impossible to rotate to face the lens – all my instincts say I shouldn't turn my back on a gorilla. So now I'm in a staring competition with 245kg of muscle and dulled rage. His lips flicker; his teeth are bared. "He's behind glass, you fairy!" teases the photographer. I turn round. There's a click, a flash – and then an almighty bang that has me half leaping, half falling away from the glass. Ya Kwanza has left the shoot, with a parting shoulder barge to the window. Zookeeper was on my childhood list of dream jobs, nestling between "spy" and "Harrison Ford's PA". Now I'm not so sure.

The day started well enough: hand-feeding dog biscuits to a pair of Andean bears. They gently snuffled their lips and tongues through the bars. No angry stares here, not even the hint of a tooth. Maybe they were grateful for the stroll they'd just taken round their enclosure while I cleaned their bedroom. It's a job akin to clearing out a giant hamster cage – sweeping up shredded paper punctuated with the odd chunk of bear poo. For a new father, this was not a challenge. Compared with what my son produces, you could dab bear poo behind your ears as cologne.

The bears returned to their pristine lair while I went off to feed two African red river hogs. These russet-coloured beauties look like pigs designed by Jim Henson's Creature Workshop. A pale Mohican hairdo runs the length of their spine, and tassels on their ears stick out like handlebars. I'm so taken with these living Muppets, and so aglow from the thrill of feeding bears without losing my cool, that I start to wonder whether I've missed a calling. "The Bear Whisperer". "The Hog King". My legend starts here.

As the hogs mount the pen walls to reach the pears I'm holding out to them, I spot some feathers in the mud below. "Pigeon," says their keeper. "Don't fall in, these guys'll eat anything." I laugh jovially, and make sure I hold the final pear by the stalk. "Want to get rid of a body, drop it in a pig pen," adds the keeper. A fast-forward of my alternate career runs through my head: after drinking too much at the Christmas party, I fall into the enclosure, am eaten by punk-haired pigs, and no one can keep a straight face at my funeral.

I start to think zookeeping might not be for me after all. This is confirmed when I enter the Bird Centre to see a keeper cutting up dead mice with a pair of scissors. I feel I've wandered onto the set of a Beatrix Potter slasher film. If tiny dismembered furry heads, tails and hind legs aren't disturbing enough, alongside them is a bag of live crickets and two pots of different kinds of beetle larvae: mealworms and morio worms. An "I'm a Celebrity..." smorgasbord.

The bird keeper and I wander through a wetland enclosure handing out these treats to wildfowl, such as the splendidly named white-faced whistling duck. Putting my hand in the seething pots of segmented brown worms makes me feel a bit queasy, so I pretend they're pasta quills and delve around with eyes averted. Then I discover the difference between the two kinds of worm: mealworms are smaller, and won't bite you. Following a nip from an angry morio, I become obsessed with gripping the worm high up its writhing torso to avoid attack by its tiny mouth. I am cutting an even more pathetic figure than the time I got motion sickness on the dodgems.

If I can't wrangle a worm, how would I cope with looking after Ya Kwanza? Whenever he needs to be examined by a vet, he has to be subdued with a dart gun and carried away by seven keepers. If he so much as stirred on the stretcher, I'd drop my end and run until I reached the sea, at which point I would start swimming. It looks as if my zookeeping dreams are finished: I've stared into the eyes of a gorilla, and seen only disdain. Still, at least now I know what it's like to audition for Simon Cowell. ■

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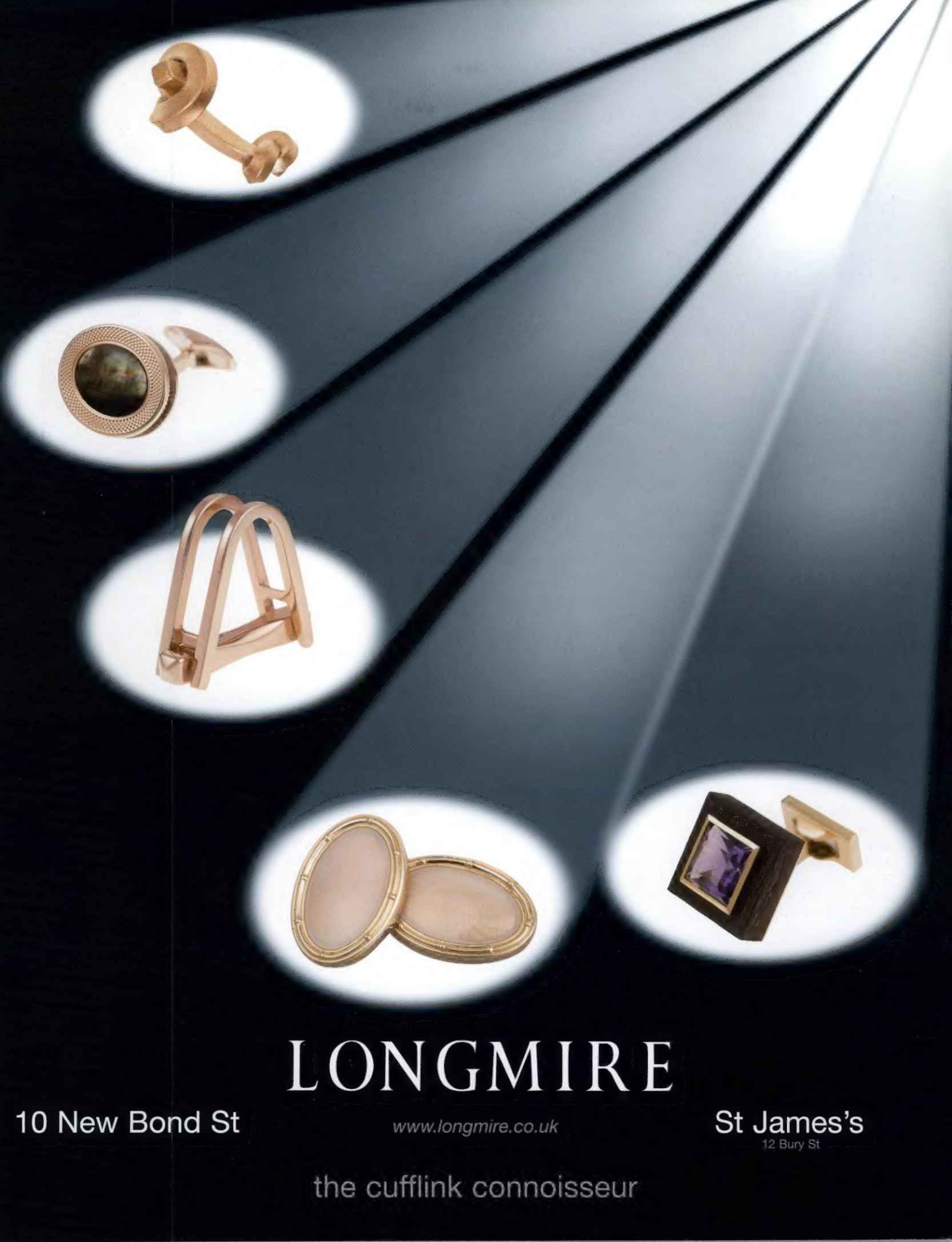
Zookeeper was on my childhood list of dream jobs, nestling between "spy" and "Harrison Ford's PA". Now I'm not so sure

PHOTOGRAPH **DAVID YEO**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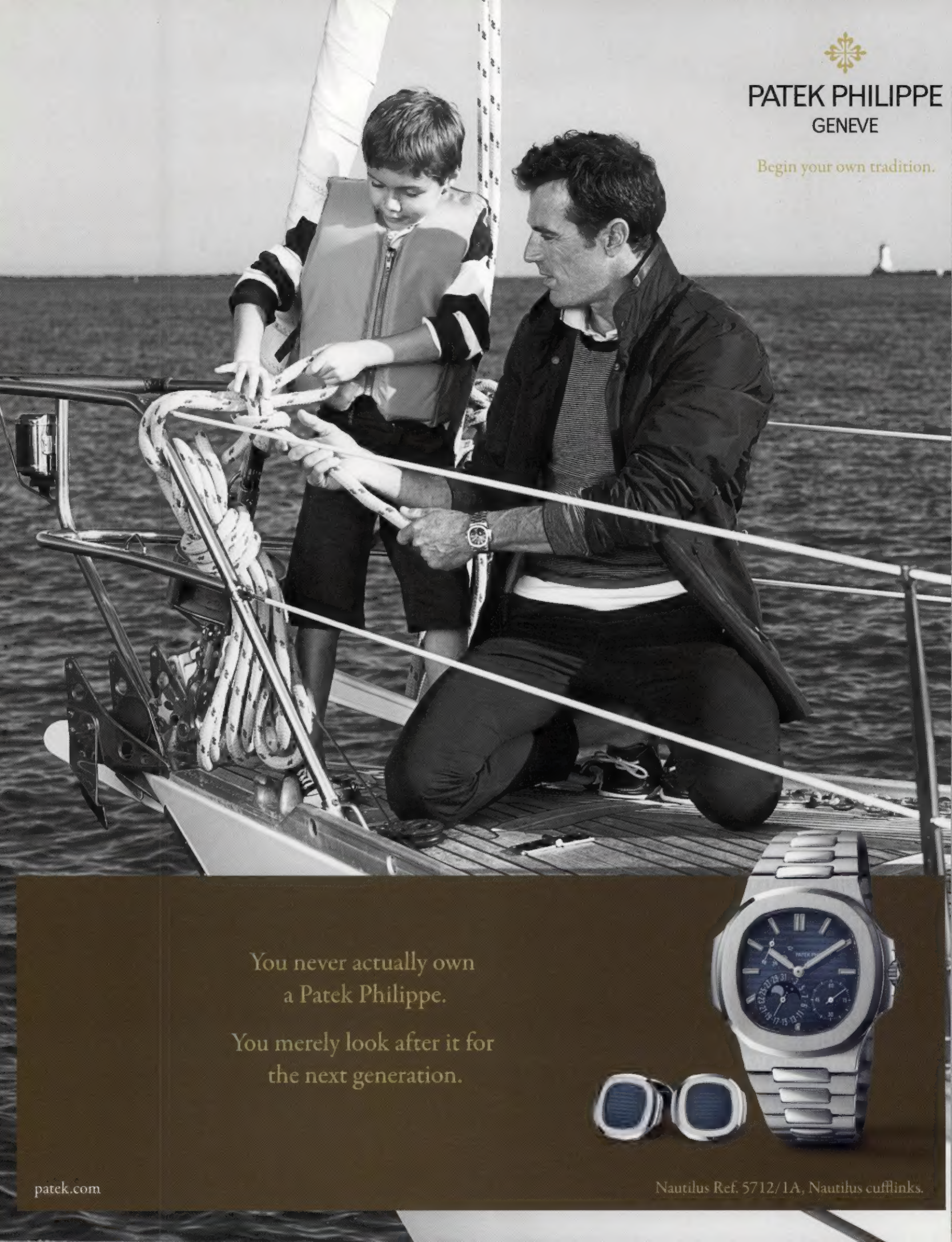
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